TRIBEBOOK:

SILENT STRIDERS™

LEGENDS OF THE GAROU

Those Who Have Eyes To See

The boy slept. His hair, cropped close at the bottom but floppy up top, spread out on a pillowcase threadbare from many washings. Moonlight from his window, the sash thrown up and curtains tucked aside in any weather, shone wanly on his skin, tanned golden from the sun and unmarked by the blemishes that would accompany adolescence. His hands, resting atop the hand-pieced coverlet, were callused by baseball bats, and shovels for digging in the dirt. He could be almost any boy, anywhere.

But he wasn't. He began to stir, twitching as his closed eyes futilely cast about the room. His knees curled up against his body, his hands clenched into fists. He mumbled words that would have sounded like gibberish to his own ears. The susurrus of ancient words twisted itself around the shafts of moonlight, creeping along the ceiling and floor to the corners of the room where it gathered its tiny echoes. Then suddenly, the dreamer awoke. A shock like a dousing in icy water wrenched the boy bolt upright in bed, gasping a hoarse breath into his lungs.

"Mom!" Tony shouted. "I saw a ghost!"

It was not his mother who came to his bedside. It never was; Mom was almost always gone, but in the middle of the night he never remembered that. Tony's father came, his voice patient even though Tony could tell the reminder hurt him. "What's wrong? Are you scared?"

Tony watched his father's shadowy figure stumble sleepily to sit on the edge of his bed. "I saw a woman. She was kind of floating, and I could see through her. I'm not scared. She just surprised me, I guess."

His father fought down a yawn. "This woman, she didn't do anything threatening? She had all her body parts?"

Tony snorted in exaggerated scorn. "Dad, this isn't a horror movie. She just wanted to tell me something, I think." He slouched back on his pillow pensively. "I don't remember much now. I remembered it all just a minute ago."

Tony's father ruffled his hair. "That's how dreams work. And ghosts," he added, before he could be corrected. "Ghosts do that too, I'm sure. Go back to sleep, kiddo."

"Night, Dad." Tony slid back under the covers as the door closed, and was back to sleep in no time at all.

This wasn't the first time Tony had been haunted in his own bed. Just two years ago he'd started hearing voices that crept up on him as he tried to sleep. The school shrink recommended an astonishing cocktail of psychoactive drugs. Tony's father declined; the school nurse decided to give him a little something anyway.

The school's legal counsel settled quickly — even though pharmaceutical companies practically bought ads on the sides of school buses, the lawyer knew that standard procedure was to bully the parents into consenting *prior* to administering drugs. The settlement put a large down payment on a nicer house in another suburb. The voices never really went away, but Tony learned not to mention them to anyone, not even his dad. It just made him worry, and Tony hated that.

He never mentioned the ghost again either. But she came again a few months later, and again, and again. Tony's sun-kissed skin grew pale, and not because of winter, or any amount of time spent indoors. Tony's father was concerned, but Tony shrugged it off. He still played baseball in the spring, but his father noticed that he always walked home from practice alone.

A year passed. The ghostly woman came more regularly now, floating into his room when the moon's light swelled. She was always dressed in flowing white clothes, like he'd expect any ghost to be. She was beautiful too, and that was something he hadn't really expected. He had thought of ghosts, when he thought of them, as rotting, skeletal things, or at least as old people, the kind of people who usually died. The ghost's hair was black, like his mother's, her eyes dark beneath high-arched brows. Her body was slender and smooth — and clearly visible beneath the filmy white dress she wore. Tony couldn't imagine mentioning this to his father. His mother still wasn't around.

He would wake when she came to him, and lie still to watch as she floated near the ceiling. She looked like a swimmer struggling to dive deeper into the water, pushing against an unseen current; but her own lightness kept holding her back. Sometimes, he would pretend to sleep when she was there, just to see what she would do. She didn't seem to mind. He slept then, under her floating, watchful eyes. While she watched, his sleep was restful, quiet — the sleep of the dead.

One night, when Tony came in for dinner, he saw his father had set three places at the table. "Who's coming?" he asked.

"Your mother," his father answered.

"Oh," Tony mumbled, and continued on his way to his room.

Several minutes later, his father appeared in the doorway, looking faintly disapproving. "Aren't you excited about seeing your mother?"

Tony didn't look up from his comic book. "None of the other kids at school get all happy about seeing their moms. Except Jamie, and his mom's in jail."

His father sighed, "We're not a normal family. Your mother does important things." He raised his hands in a gesture meant to ward off the usual response. "No, she doesn't work for the government, and no, I can't tell you where she's been. Just try to understand that she loves you, and she'd be here with us if she could."

Tony looked unconvinced, but he nodded. "I know, Dad. And I'll be happy to see her when she gets here. If she gets here."

His father stood up slowly. "Fair enough, kiddo," he said, his voice thick with all the memories of times she hadn't. "Fair enough."

Tony's mother made it home before dessert. Tony jumped out of his chair and met her at the kitchen entrance, wrapping his arms around her waist. He *was* happy to see her, and she seemed thrilled to see him — she crouched down to fold him in a hug, saying his name over and over. Then she held him out at arm's length to look him over. "How you've grown," she said. She always said that, but this time the phrase held a question that was pointed over his shoulder at his father.

Tony's father shrugged, a slight lift of the shoulders that Tony didn't think he was meant to see. His mother pulled him close again, and Tony got the uncomfortable feeling that she was *sniffing* him.

"Mo-om!" he whined as he pulled away, straightening the wrinkles she'd made in his shirt in an attempt to remain cool.

"Sorry," his mother said. "It's just that I've been gone so long."

"I know," Tony replied flatly.

An uncomfortable silence fell. "Who wants pie?" Tony's father blurted with forced cheerfulness. The awkward moment gave way before the ice cream and cherry onslaught. Dishes clanked, spoons clattered, they talked about weather and baseball and were a family again.

But later that evening, Tony heard his parents arguing in their room, after they thought he was asleep. He lay still, breathing as shallowly as he could so that the sound of his own breath wouldn't drown out their angry but muted words.

"How could you let this happen to him?" his mother demanded.

"Let what happen to him?" his father said. "There's nothing wrong with Tony. He had a physical before baseball started."

"This isn't about his body," his mother countered crossly.

"Then what is it? He's a smart kid, he's just quiet. Where's the harm in that?"

"It isn't that either! It's his soul — he smells like death. Something's touched him — has he been hearing the voices again? What, what haven't you told me?" his mother demanded.

Tony shoved his face into his pillow, willing his father not to tell. "He told me he saw a ghost, some time last year, maybe even two years ago. It sounded like a nightmare, so I never mentioned it," his father explained, sounding pained.

His mother shouted now, so loud that he could easily hear. "A ghost! And you never told me! You should have told me!"

Tony had to pull his head out of the pillow to hear his father's bitter but quiet reply. "What if I had? What if I had called you every time your son woke in the night — would you have come home?" Silence filled the whole house. Tony screwed his eyes shut in imitation of sleep, in case they had heard him moving around and were coming to turn their anger on him. But his father went on. "I thought it was just a dream. Maybe it wasn't. I'm just a man, I can't do what you do."

"I know," his mother sighed bitterly. "Has he ever mentioned a ghost again?" Tony visualized his father's brief gesture, no. "That's good, I guess. I can protect him while I'm here. I'll stay as long as I can."

"And when you go?" his father asked, resignedly.

His mother's answer was too quiet for him to hear, as the argument deflated into a discussion. Soon bored, Tony drifted off into restless sleep.

When Tony woke in the morning, his mother was still there. He wasn't too surprised — he'd listened in last night after all. But he was surprised to find her still there the second morning, and the third. She made pancakes when he woke up. She came to a baseball game. She mended his clothes for the upcoming school year. But most of all, she watched him. When he was reading in his room, or catching minnows in the creek, or throwing green apples at the neighbor's cat, he'd look behind him and there she was. Tony had always wanted to have his mom around, but he hadn't realized just how nosy mothers could be.

The ghost woman didn't come to see him anymore. Tony suspected that his mother was awake, watching, scaring her away. He tried staying awake, but he always fell asleep before his mother did. As days turned to weeks — the longest his mother had ever stayed home — he found himself missing the woman in white more and more. He sometimes wished his mother would leave so that the ghost would come back again; he always felt guilty immediately afterward, and would creep into his mother's room or climb up the side of her chair to kiss her cheek.

One morning he came down the stairs and there were no pancakes. Instead, his mother's small traveling bag was packed and sitting on the table. "Are you leaving?" he asked, trying to only sound sad and not all the other emotions that were bouncing up and down in his head.

"Yep," his mother said. "And you're coming with me."

"I am?" he squeaked. His mother nodded. "I've got a baseball game the day after tomorrow."

"You'll have to miss it," she said, not even turning around from the kitchen counter.

"Coach'll be mad," Tony observed dubiously.

"Strawberry or grape?" his mother asked, gesturing at a line of half-made sandwiches on the counter.

"Grape. School starts in two weeks," he noted, halfheartedly.

"I know," she answered, turning back to the sandwiches. "You'll be back by then. Probably."

Tony was intensely curious now. "Where are we going? Does Dad know?"

"Of course he does. We're going to see your grandfather." Tony's mother slapped the sandwich together and expertly wrangled the wobbling tower back into the bread bag.

"I don't have a grandfather," Tony said.

His mother dropped the sandwiches into the top of her bag. "You're right, he's not really your grandfather. But call him that, because it's polite."

"Ooookay. When are we leaving?" Tony asked, scratching the side of his head in growing bemusement.

"Right now," she answered, swinging her bag off the table and across her shoulders. She pushed a smaller bag to him. "Here's everything you'll need."

But what about my comic books, my baseball glove, my favorite jacket, my father, he thought. He quietly slung his bag over a shoulder like his mother had done, or as best he could, and walked out the door behind her. And what about *her*, he wondered — will she be able to find me?

Tony had been tired before — really tired, like after a double-header and a cookout all on the same day. But that was nothing compared to how tired he was now. They had walked to the end of the street and caught a bus. Tony had never taken the bus all the way across town before, so it had been kind of neat to watch the city unfurl outside his window. The whole traveling thing had seemed pretty easy. Then they got off at the very last stop and started walking.

And they kept walking, all day, and long into the night. Tony's mother took long steps, her legs seeming to stretch as she picked her feet up and then snap back to normal size once they hit the ground. She didn't talk much except to occasionally tell him to keep up, or to watch out for that hole, and anyway he would have had a hard time hearing her because he could never catch up. Tony began to trudge around mid-afternoon; his mother balanced his bag on top of hers, and kept going. When he got up from the ground after their sparse

supper of sandwiches and apples, he could barely shuffle. When she found them a place to sleep in an unlocked barn, he was asleep before his head hit the hard ground. If his ghost came to him during the night, he slept on unknowing.

The second day passed in the same way; on the third, they hitched a ride in an eighteen-wheeler. After Tony's mother bought the driver dinner at a truck stop, the two of them went a few hours further on foot. Tony was young and strong, and already his muscles were stretching and growing to meet this new challenge. But after only two hours of walking the next morning — the sun was barely up — they reached a small town. Tony's mother dropped her bag on a bench facing the main street, which had not a single traffic light. "We're early," she said. "Catching a ride got us here faster than I'd expected. That was a lucky break. We were running behind — I'd forgotten how much shorter your legs are."

Tony sat down on the bench bemusedly. He had nothing to say; he couldn't figure out how his mother could have expected him to walk here, on his own two feet, any faster than he had.

"Wait here for me. I'll see if they're ready for us," she said over her shoulder as she walked away, her steps as springy as they had been when they left home. Tony waited until she rounded a corner, then arranged his sack as a pillow and stretched out on the bench. There looked to be plenty of time to catch a nap before the little town woke up — if it ever did.

The sun was high in the sky when Tony woke. Squinting against the glare, he was turning his face to the bench to try to get a little more sleep when he felt a familiar presence. She was here. Tony's eyes sprang open and he looked around frantically, futilely — the sunlight was overwhelming, he could barely see the buildings around him let alone a wisp of a woman in white. With a lump in his throat, he closed his eyes, imagining her floating just above him. She had never come to him before in daylight. Was she worried for him? Or had she been watching him all along, and he never before missed her enough to see her?

He opened his eyes just the slightest bit, screening the light through his lashes, but still she was invisible to him. He imagined the shape of her face out of the motes of dust that sparkled in the air. When his eyes rolled back into his head from the sheer effort of it, he could see her, closer than ever before. She was right above him, her nose nearly brushing his. Her lips moved soundlessly, forming words he did not know. He was content, lying on a hard bench in a strange town, alone, so long as she was there. She seemed pleased, too, by her newly achieved closeness. When Tony sat bolt upright at hearing his mother's voice, a jolt of memory as vivid as any of his own seized him as he passed through her ephemeral body:

Sand and water. Red and green. And the joy of running, running with hot wind in his nose and warm ground shifting beneath his paws.

Paws? Tony thought blearily as he rubbed his eyes back into focus.

"Tony!" his mother called again, jogging up the street toward the bench. "Wake up, grab your things. He'll be here any minute." Curtains twitched, annoyed faces behind them; his mother's voice was the loudest thing in town. "Tony, wake up!"

"I am awake," he said mildly. "I thought we were early?"

"We were. Early just means the next thing comes sooner," his mother said as she grabbed her bag from the bench.

"What is the next thing?" Tony mumbled as he slung his bag over his shoulder.

"We're meeting your grandfather at the bus," she explained with growing impatience. "Come on, it'll be here any minute."

The memory of running on four feet just moments ago had been so vivid that Tony stumbled on the two he had as he trotted after his mother. They jogged the length of the small town, setting dogs yapping behind lace curtains. They stopped in front of a weathered pharmacy that had a hand-lettered placard reading "BUS" in the window just in time. Brakes hissed, the bus lurched to a stop, and a stooped old man stepped onto the curb.

Tony's mother stepped forward, with her head and eyes down. "Grandfather, thank you for meeting us." She was far more polite and deferential than Tony had ever seen her. It made Tony a little scared; he decided to study the concrete too.

The old man's chuckle was dry but strong. Even though his back curved with age he was still taller than Tony's mother. He reached out with a gnarled hand to lift her chin, bringing her eyes to meet his. "Oralee, how could I not. You have done so much for me, and asked for so little." He turned his attention to Tony, who fidgeted as if he could feel the attention resting on his head. "Is this the young man I've come so far to see?"

Tony's mother put her hand on his shoulder, pushing him gently forward. "I'm Tony," he stammered. "Pleased to meet you. Grandfather," he remembered to add.

The old man put his hand on Tony's shoulder. Tony could feel the calluses through his shirt. "Go on, Oralee. Tony and I are going to go for a walk." With that, Tony's mother nodded, turned, and left. In addition to being frightened, Tony now felt a little betrayed.

The old man waited until Tony's mother was out of sight, then steered Tony into the dusty pharmacy. "But first, we're going to get a nice cold drink. Riding the bus always makes me thirsty." They sat on faded stools while the old man counted out change for two glass bottles of soda. Tony's feet dangled awkwardly while he slurped at the bottle, which tasted as old as the signs in the windows. The old man didn't seem to mind. "Did you enjoy your trip here, Tony?" he inquired.

Tony shrugged, "It was okay. Maybe a little weird. I miss my Dad."

The old man nodded. "Saying goodbye to the people we love is always the hardest part of traveling. The heart doesn't harden as easily as your feet. Do you know why you came to see me?" Tony shook his head. "Your mother is worried about you. Now, hold still a moment while I get a good look at you."

Tony set his bottle on the counter so the old man could peer into his ears, pull up his eyelids, even check his teeth. Tony was mortified, but the mousy woman behind the counter didn't even look up. When the prodding was done, Tony asked, "Are you a doctor?"

"Well, in a way," the old man chuckled. "But I never spent a day in a hospital in my life. Drink up, and we'll have our walk."

Tony swallowed as much soda as he could, then hopped down from the stool. He burped as soon as his feet hit the floor. His cheeks burned with embarrassment until the old man belched with obvious relish and a twinkle in his eye. Put at ease, Tony burped for several blocks as they walked side by side.

After a few minutes of walking they came upon a graveyard, a tumbledown collection of stones within a rusted fence. The gate stood ajar; the old man stepped through, and Tony followed. They walked among the markers in silence for some time, pausing now and then to puzzle out a worn inscription or to gently trace a finger over the sculpted stone. The old man stopped in front of a headstone that refused to crumble like those around it, and broke the silence. "What can you tell me about the person buried here, Tony?"

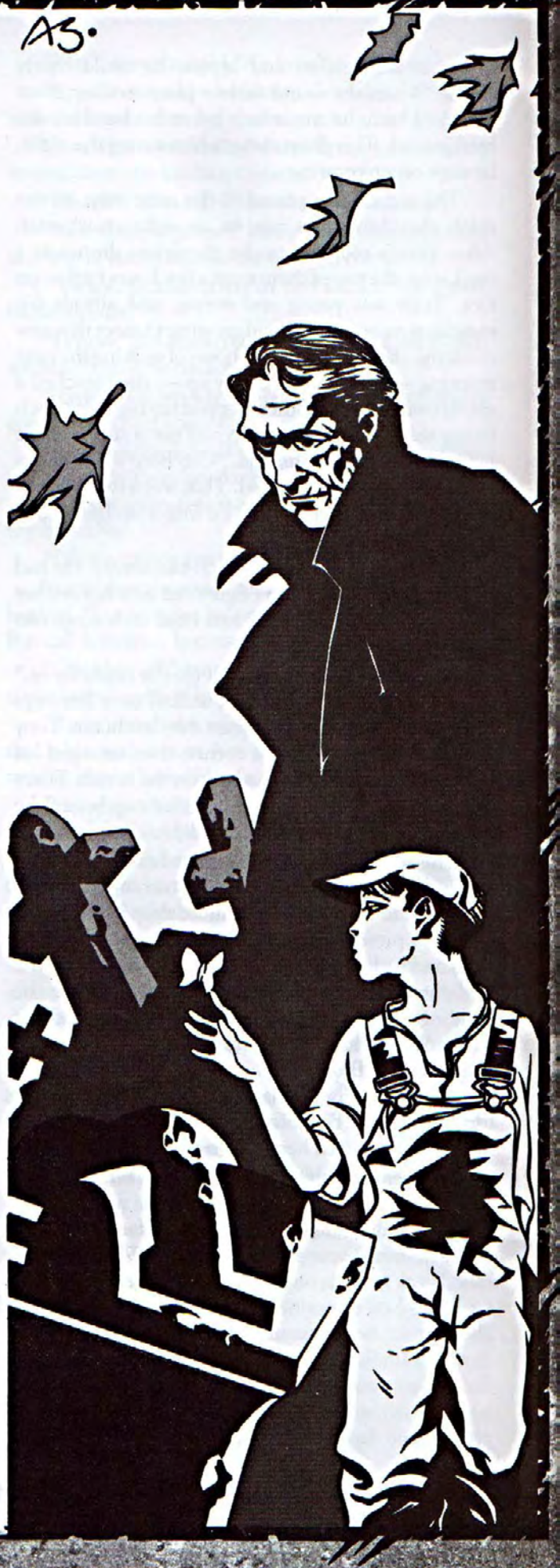
Tony crouched to look at the headstone. "Her name was Malinda Parsell. She died sixty-four years ago. She was twenty-three years old."

The old man nodded distractedly, his eyes trained on the empty air above the stone. "Yes. But can you tell me what she looked like? Or how she died?"

Tony bit his lip and studied the stone carefully. "There's nothing else here, Grandfather."

"Are you sure?" the old man pressed.

Tony stood and walked around the stone, then studied the graves on both sides of it hoping for some clue. "I don't see anything else about her."



The old man's eyes came back into focus as he settled his gaze on Tony. "All right then. Let's walk back."

When they had left the graveyard, propping the gate closed behind them, the old man ventured another question. "Tony, have you ever seen a ghost?"

Tony stumbled, and his heart froze in his chest for an awful moment. Not since that first night had he said a word about the woman in white. Tony didn't want to talk about her, but he didn't want to lie to the old man, either. He had been kind. "A few times, maybe," he stuttered out. "A floating woman."

The old man's gaze sharpened quickly, like a hawk on a nature program spotting a mouse. "Does she know your name?"

Tony, surprised by the question, thought for a moment. When he answered, he forgot to be evasive. "I don't know. I think she does, but she's never talked to me."

"Do you see her often?" the old man asked.

Tony studied the cracks in the sidewalk. "Every once in a while."

The old man stopped and looked around. "Is she here now?"

"No," Tony answered without even glancing up. They walked the rest of the way back in silence.

Tony's mother was waiting for them at the corner. Tony barely got a smile from her before she turned to the old man, who took her elbow and steered her a short way down the sidewalk. Tony drew with a finger on the dirty shop window and tried not to listen in, but of course he did.

"Is he all right?" Tony's mother asked.

"Yes, for now," the old man replied. "He doesn't seem to see ghosts naturally, so it must be presenting itself to him — if in fact it's a ghost at all."

Tony's mother frowned. "Could you banish it?"

The old man scratched the back of his head thoughtfully. "Maybe. Maybe not. Might just make it mad. I think it'd be better to give him the tools to defend himself."

Tony's mother glanced over at him; he paid his full attention to his window doodles. "He's so young..."

"It will be an early change, yes, but I think it will work out for the best," the old man asserted. Tony's mother nodded hesitantly, quietly. "I'll send some trustworthy folks your way," he continued, "for now, take your boy home, and take care of him."

The school year began. For a while, Tony's family looked like a normal family: father, mother, son. The illusion didn't last, though. Some of the kids thought Tony's account of his trip with his mother was cool, but more of them thought it sounded like Tony's family was poor and stupid. Tony got in a fight when somebody called his mother a name. The boy's parents called the police, who showed up to investigate a charge of child endangerment. Tony's father told them the car had broken down, and apologized that his son had exaggerated the results. The police went away, but Tony was marked now; whispers and taunts followed him through his school days.

If that weren't enough, Tony missed the lady in white. He hadn't seen her since his trip. He wondered if she had gotten lost, or if he had scared her or made her mad when he sat up right into her. More likely, he thought, she knew that his mother was always watching him, and she didn't like it. He didn't like it much either. Tony had missed his mother for years and waited anxiously for her visits, but now that she was here for days on end, he couldn't find any time alone.

When his mother announced her imminent departure one morning, Tony felt immense relief — and immense guilt immediately after. What kind of kid was happy his mother was going away? He would miss her — he missed missing her. His mother moved quickly, as usual; Tony gave her a hug and kiss goodbye before he went to school, and when he got home she was gone. Tony checked: yes, he missed her. With a feeling strangely near contentment he settled back into life's routines with his father.

After a quiet dinner, Tony excused himself to bed. His father seemed distracted; he didn't even comment that it was awfully early. In his room, Tony shucked off his clothes, set a book next to his pillow in case his father checked in, then climbed under the covers to wait.

He didn't wait long. The sky outside was still aglow with the sun's last light when the ghostly lady coalesced just below his ceiling. As slowly as ever, she drifted down towards Tony's bed. By the time the moon rose, she was just above him. Emboldened by the burst of imagery that filled his mind when last he accidentally "touched" her, Tony reached up a tentative hand to brush her cheek.

As gentle as he intended to be, his hand reached her ghostly face and went right through. He had the barest, shocking glimpse of his hand behind her lips before he was overcome once more by alien sensations.

Red desert, green river. His paws treaded sand almost soundlessly, a whisper of shining scattered grains. He was a sleek, black-furred wolf, and he made his home where he chose, in the sere austerity of the desert or the riotous bounty of the water's margins. And he was not alone — all around him were wolves, black as kohl, now running at his side, now challenging him to test his speed.

They ran until the sun's barge sailed across the horizon and the silvery disk of the moon rose into the sky. Then they stopped to rest on a stone platform, open to the night sky.

He was a man now, strong in arm and quick-footed. The others rested too, some panting in their wolf bodies while others also chose human skin to shed the heat of their efforts. She sat next to him, her hand on his knee. He reached up to caress her cheek, a fond, tired gesture. "Now, at last, I can share this with you," she said.

He looked around in wonder. "What is this?"

"This is what used to be," she answered. "Before the dark times. This is your home."

The door to Tony's bedroom cracked with a noise like a gunshot as something very large crashed into it from the outside. Tony sat up, ghostly mist swirling all around him.

Dark shapes rose up in the desert, black against the stars. The smell of unclean things twined about the distinctive odor of snake, wafted toward the weary travelers. She grabbed his arm and pulled him upright. "Run!" she shouted, and they ran.

With the next brutal crashing, a furred, clawed arm ripped through the wood of the door. Tony leapt from his bed to the window, pushed through the screen, and tumbled out onto the porch roof. Scrambling for the edge, he slid down the support column heedless of the scratches it left on his bare arms and legs. Then he ran.

The enemy could not match the speed of the wolves, but they had already run for a long time and were tired while the enemy had rested, lying in wait. The time for running was over; it was now time to fight.

Tony ran down the dark street; the streetlights were out, but there was enough moon to see by—barely. The monster followed him clumsily, collapsing the porch roof beneath its weight. But there were others in the darkness. Tony ran, ghostly substance still whipping around him, but he would soon have nowhere to run.

They reached the high ground and turned to make a stand. The desert vomited forth enemies, huge creatures of crushing strength and tiny ones dripping with venom. As horrifying as the enemy was to look on, the fight played out like a dance before him. He knew as he drew his wickedly curved blade to slash this way and he would behead this enemy, then turn to slide the blade between the scales of the enemy behind him. She twirled in her own dance of death beside him, but while her body carried out its prescribed motions her words cut through the mists of time.

Tony ran as far as he could. They were playing with him; they let him run until his muscles burned. Finally, exhausted and hobbled by cut and bruised feet, he stopped. He was lost, and surrounded. The beasts closed in, snarling. His hands balled into fists at his sides—he couldn't run, but he would fight them as long as he could. Claws began to sprout and sharpen, digging into the flesh of his own palms. He heard a snarl escape his own mouth, his lips stretched thin against teeth, his jaw cracking painfully. His vision swam as his body warped beneath him. One last time he saw her ghostly face, wracked with despair, still just inches from his own.

"We have not forgotten!" she cried, her voice high and thin amid the chaos. "We will return to you before the end!" The enemy swarmed up the slope; she was set upon on all sides, and he could not cut through enough of them to reach her. "But beware! We are not alone in the darkness!" And then she was gone, lost in the serpents' coils. Rage flooded him, filling him up...

...pushing him into the very shape of the monsters that surrounded him, taunting him. He heard a thin scream as his body, the body of a boy, exploded in a blur of flesh and fur; the ghostly wisps of her form disappeared as quickly and as suddenly as if they had been enveloped in some vast, black hand. She was gone, he knew, forever. With a howl of despair he threw himself at his tormentors.

Dawn found Tony walking down the street to his battle-scarred home. He wore poorly fitting pants scrounged from a neighbor's laundry, and nothing else; his body and feet bore evidence of his ordeal. Tony's mother was standing by the remains of the front porch. He stopped far from her, and fixed her with an accusing stare. "You did this. On purpose."

Tony's mother nodded. She didn't look happy, but Tony didn't particularly care.

"Why?" he demanded.

"To protect you," she said.

"Protect me?" he shouted. "I could have died!"

His mother made no reply.

"And you took her away from me. You meant to do that," Tony spat accusingly.

His mother answered calmly, "Ghosts are dangerous."

"She wasn't just a ghost!" Tony wailed.

"Then what was she?" his mother asked.

Tony fell silent. "I don't know," he answered finally. "But I'm going to find her. No matter what it takes." Then he turned and began to walk away.

"Where are you going?" his mother called.

"Traveling," Tony answered over his shoulder.

The old man had been wrong. As Tony walked away from home, his feet were tender, but his heart felt like stone.

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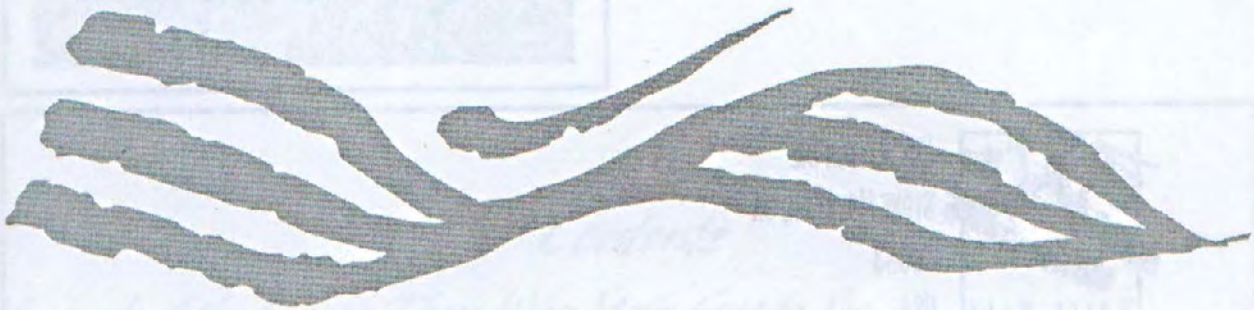

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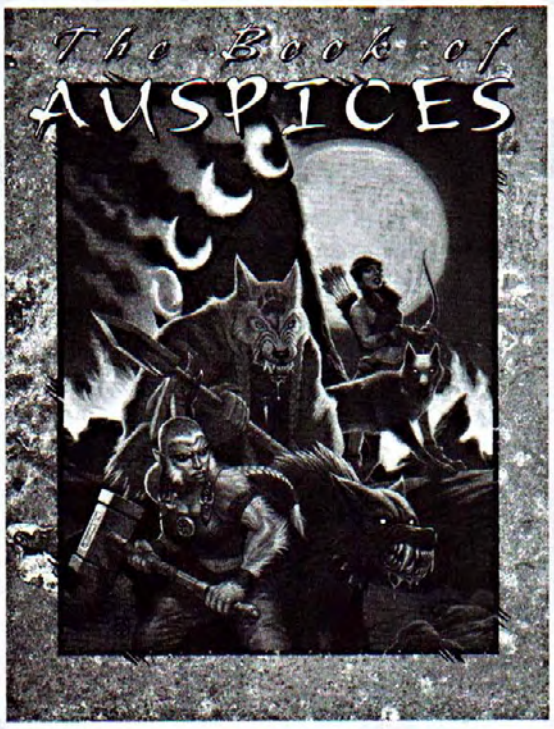
Coming next for Werewolf:



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Chapter One: The Road Behind Us

"Wandering through many countries and over many seas, I come, my brother, to these sorrowful obsequies, to present you with the last guerdon of death, and speak, though in vain, to your silent ashes"
— Gaius Valerius Catullus, *Carmina*

Maybe you were told this tale by a trucker who recognized you for what you were. Maybe it was a mentor speaking to you around the time when your pack of cubs needed to learn the tribe's history. Maybe you're one of the few fortunates who can hear the voices of our lost ancestors. Regardless, the story probably went something like this.

Every Garou knows who we are: The Silent Striders are wanderers. But any group of wanderers is really split into two groups — those who wander by choice, and those who wander because they have no home to return to. I couldn't tell you what the percentage split is among our tribe. It doesn't really matter. We have both kinds. In fact, to some degree every Strider *is* both kinds. We don't have a home to return to anymore, and we've bred with loners, outcasts, travelers, and wanderers for so long that the road is in our blood.

We're Palestinians. We're Native Americans. We were Jews until they had a homeland and we might be still. Gypsies. Exiles and long travelers. Families throughout Africa share our blood, and so do the descendants of the nomads of Central Asia. And since movement is in our blood and our ancestors' blood, we find ourselves attracted to humans who travel around — at least, those that travel overland. Truck drivers. Bands. Salesmen. Migrant workers, the indigent, those who can't keep a home. These, far more than the stereotype you might hear of the Silent Striders as "Egyptian travelers," represent our true nature.

Egypt would be a good place to start this tale, but our tribe's story begins before there was an Egypt in any sense.

Ancient Times

Tribes like the Shadow Lords and the Silver Fangs are obsessed with their place in Gaia's favor and their role as Luna's chosen tribe. We are less so. We know ourselves to have a special place, crawling all over Gaia's surface, but we don't feel the need to dwell on the most ancient histories. We don't have to believe that Gaia and Luna singled us out for special attention: Gaia and Luna singled out *all* the Garou for special attention.

Thus. Gaia was the world. Luna was the moon. Gaia and Luna lifted up some spirits, elevating them to special roles. The bears were the healers; the ravens were the

watchers; we were the warriors. In the most primitive days of human tribes, when the population of a tribe grew beyond a hundred or two it cleaved into two or more tribes; so too with the tribe once simply known as "Garou." Surely the last remaining group of Garou, when all the other tribes had broken away, was the Silver Fangs. Stodgy and mired in tradition. But I digress.

I am sorry to say that I do not know what our tribe's earliest days were like. We have no ancient ancestor spirits to question. Other tribes have it easy in this regard, because if they forget a point of tribal history, a Galliard or Theurge can spend a few hours with a few ancestor-spirits and at least get an idea of what the time in question must have been like. We cannot do this — and I believe that the fact that we can't sit at our ancestors' collective knee is the reason that we so compulsively collect and share stories of our tribe's history. It's the best we can do. The problem in applying that plan to our earliest history is that in the most ancient days our ancestor-spirits were available — we didn't lose them until after Sutekh's curse, in Egypt. So there wasn't a lot of record-keeping of the days before our diaspora from Egypt. The best I can do is to guess, from common sense and from the stories I hear from other tribes.

We did not depart from the other Garou as a group, as the other tribes must have. We had little patience for tribal politics and had more interest in exploring and seeing the world than those who wished to find the next nearest Wyrm thing and destroy it. Some of our ancestors were undoubtedly exiled, while others trickled away, dissatisfied with the existing Garou community. Gradually, we gravitated to the lands around the Nile.

In those days the Nile was the greatest of roads; a Silent Strider could remain metaphorically close to home, close to his brethren and familiar nature spirits, while traveling hundreds of miles along the river through what is now Egypt and the Sudan, and even further into the wilderness. I imagine that at that time, long before recorded history, the human population of Africa lived in competition with the beasts for every scrap of food they could find. The great cat-changers — werelions, wereleopards, and others — claimed Africa for themselves early on. They were just as territorial then as they are now, though perhaps they were less spiteful in those days. We were allowed to pass through freely, though most of the time we offered tribute to the Fera lords of the land.

One of the oldest songs I know — I will not mortify you by actually singing it, and since it comes down through an old Kikuyu tongue it would not mean anything to you — is about a pair of feuding Simba chieftains. The song predates the War of Rage, I am certain, because it refers to one of the chieftains marrying a daughter off to the son of a Silver Fang ruler further north. In any case, the two chieftains, whose names translate roughly as Mountain-Stalker and Plains-Lord, used a pack of Silent Striders as their go-betweens. The pack, whose name was roughly "Wave-Dancers," took messages back and forth to opposite sides of what is now Lake Victoria and the song describes them running across the lake's surface. In a harbinger of our tribe's future, the song dedicates a verse to the Wave-Dancers' fleeing into parts unknown when Mountain-Stalker and Plains-Lord went to war.

Impergium

All Garou instinctively want to protect the pristine wilderness that lies outside of human reach. None of us wants to see civilization intrude onto the most sacred parts of Gaia's surface. One of the oldest songs I know in the Garou tongue is the *Lament for the Building of Ur*. Our ancestors knew, even in those ancient days, that humanity would spread over the face of the world if something were not done to stop them. Those Garou with close ties to the wolf simply wanted to wipe the apes out. Others wanted to build... I suppose that today we would think of them as reservations or game preserves. The Children of Gaia and the Glass Walkers — the old songs call them the Glass Walkers the "Warders" or the "Protectors" — advocated leaving the humans alone but educating them in Gaia's ways.

As a compromise between all of these points of view, the Garou of the time imposed the Impergium. Humanity's population was not permitted to increase from that point onward. One child is born; one person dies. Our tribes spread across the world to what we now think of as our traditional territories at this time. After all, each tribe of Garou had to participate in culling the human stock, and by the time of the Impergium the humans were already spread across most of Eurasia and Africa. In this way the Silver Fangs ended up in Russia, the Get of Fenris in northwest Europe, the Fianna on the British Isles, and so on. Although the Silent Striders had a large presence in northeast Africa, it was only upon the imposition of the Impergium that we really laid claim to those lands. Many Silent Striders traveled alongside nomads on the steppes of Asia, to boot — the more I consider this question, and the more old songs I hear from other Striders, the more I believe that during the days of the Impergium the Silent Striders might well have been the largest tribe of Garou. Of course, we had no influence in Garou politics, but we held vast sweeps of land and there were hundreds if not thousands of us.

Across the world, most Fera paid lip service to the Impergium and otherwise ignored it. It was given to most of them as a command from the Silver Fang kings and queens of the Garou, and the other Changing Breeds ignored the authority of the Garou in this

matter. We've always been taught that the Delirium is a response beaten into humans as a result of thousands of years of the Impergium, and my few Fera contacts tell me that the humans do suffer from the Delirium even when confronted with a Corax in its ridiculous war-form. So, once again I'll make an educated guess as to what happened. The Fera ignored the command of the Impergium when it came down from the Silver Fangs, but when human populations started to expand into, say, werelion lands in Africa, the Simba realized that some judicious culling might be in order after all. As usual, I have almost no evidence to back this up, just the facts as they currently stand and my own brilliant powers of deduction.

It is hard for me to bring up the arguments of Charles Darwin at a time like this, especially when they are so very wrong in general. I mean, great theory, Chuck, but it doesn't take the spirit world into account at all. Nature spirits do guide the development of species, every Garou knows that. But Darwin did have something right. When a species faces population pressure, if it doesn't just die out, it gets stronger. It adapts to the pressure. In the case of humanity, the Impergium started to... do things... to them. They started making better weapons. They got stronger, faster, and braver. They figured out how to till the soil and grow bigger, better plants, and domesticate wildlife.

Our *Song of the Executioner's Weariness* tells us that the Children of Gaia first went to the Silver Fangs and begged them to end the Impergium because it was cruel. The Silent Striders went second to the Silver Fangs and begged them to end the Impergium because it was *idiotic*. By systematically culling the weakest members of every human tribe, we were making the race stronger and more capable with every generation. If we did not end the Impergium, within a hundred years they would be hunting us.

The first king our ancestor Horizon-Sight spoke to ignored his pleas. That king's successor ignored Horizon-Sight just the same. But the third king, near the end of Horizon-Sight's life, heard Horizon-Sight's argument and knew it to be true. I'm sure that Horizon-Sight's large gathering of allies from most of the other tribes had nothing to do with this, nothing at all. That king called for the end of the Impergium, and though there must have been dozens of challenges to the decree, they were settled by argument or blood and the Impergium ended.

At least, it ended among the Garou.

War of Rage

The first open act of rebellion by the Fera against the kings of the Garou was to ignore the command to end the Impergium. Now, as I said above, some of the Fera, like the werebears and the Corax, had never really enforced it. But those that had enforced it of their own volition — rather than having had it imposed by the Garou — saw no reason to stop. They had never truly acknowledged the authority of the Garou in general or the Silver Fangs in particular. They saw the Garou lords as an English king might later see a French king: a cousin worthy of respect, but not fealty.

Mind you, the Silver Fangs didn't see this disobedience as reason to start a war. But they paid plenty of Striders plenty of gold, Gnosis, and favors to take messages back and forth between their courts and the courts of the Simba and other lords of the Changing Breeds, trying to bring them around to the proper way of thinking. Over the next century or so the discussions between our lords and the Fera lords got more heated.

We were right in the middle of one of the most serious disputes. As I mentioned before, we claimed most of the run of the Nile as our own. But throughout the Nile the Mokolé — werecrocodiles or werealligators, I don't exactly remember what they were, and they're gone now — disputed that claim. Over time an uneasy peace arose, where the Mokolé claimed the waters and we claimed the land, but every flood season things got confused. That confusion led to bloodshed more than once, and while we Striders are as reasonable as any other Garou, I have here a short epic poem, *Dance of the Dragon-walkers* about a nighttime raid on a Mokolé nest that resulted in the destruction of a half-dozen eggs.

After a few generations of this sort of challenge, retribution, and counter-retribution, the command came down from the Silver Fang kings: there was to be war on those Fera who would not submit to our leadership. By this time that meant all of them, with the exception of a few widely mistrusted turncoats.

We do not sing of the War of Rage anymore. I know there are songs of glory out there, and epics of daring and courage. I will not sing them or read them aloud. I share them with younger Garou only so that the knowledge is not lost, but I write them down and pass them along. Our tribes took too much joy in the slaughter of Gaia's other children, and I won't even ritually repeat it.

Egypt

The Garou lived in Egypt from the earliest days, before the Impergium, until Sutekh's curse and the subsequent diaspora during the Thirteenth Dynasty of what modern Egyptologists call the Second Intermediate Period. Unlike many other tribes, we never pretended to rule the humans of our protectorate. We lived as advisors, perhaps — viziers to the pharaohs, the priests that whispered advice by night — but few of us ruled.

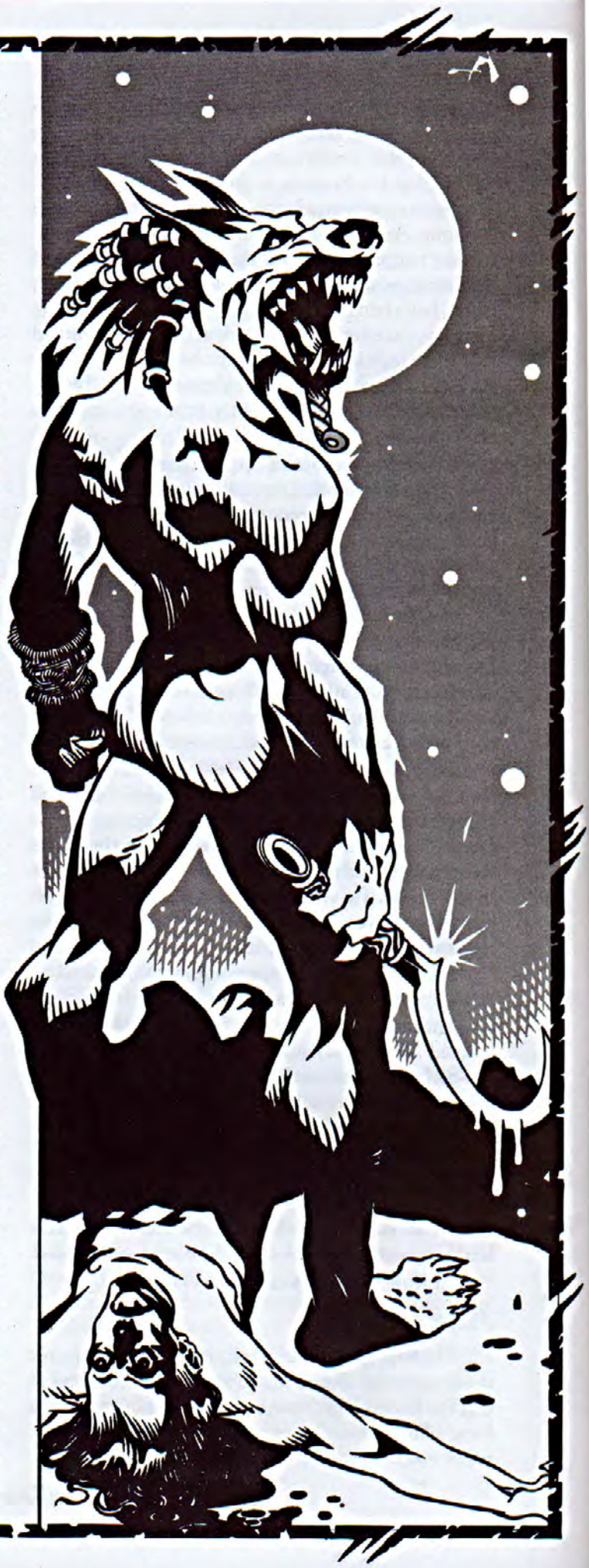
Egypt was really two kingdoms, from the earliest times. Lower Egypt — to the north — was a distinctly different place from Upper Egypt — to the south.

These "Upper" and "Lower" designations might not make sense on an ordinary map to someone not familiar with the area, but if you take a moment and look at the way the Nile flows you will realize that Upper Egypt is the highlands, the place from which the Nile flows, and of course the map makes it obvious that the Nile flows from central Africa northward through Egypt to the Mediterranean. The Nile is the life of Egypt, and so the division between the Nile Delta and the highlands provides the distinction between the two kingdoms. The earliest lords of the joint Egyptian kingdom wore crowns and other emblems that acknowledged that Egypt was one land composed of two.

Of course for the Silent Striders the Nile was a critically important sign of Gaia's health. If the Nile was healthy and strong, it might occasionally flood, but it provided life to all of Egypt. The Nile flood plain was the most fertile land for scores of miles in any direction. Before the Wyrm went insane, we agreed with the Mokolé and others that the Nile was a representation of the Wyrm itself. It brought new life through destruction.

There were other supernatural forces to contend with in ancient Egypt: the wizards; the Cult of Sutekh; and the immortals. The wizards weren't like the ordinary earth cultists and hedge witches that most Garou were used to. No, these men (for they were mostly men) codified and mathematicized the rituals that allowed them to tap into Gaia's power. They made them repeatable, and predictable. Some of our stories go so far as to suggest that the earliest Egyptian wizards taught the Garou the art of creating a ritual, as opposed to a simple prayer or a Gift. The magical discipline that the wizards taught one another had no moral component to it, though, and that did occasionally lead them into our teeth. They used magic without concern for the condition of the nearby Umbra. Some suggest that these most ancient wizards' defiant and flagrant use of ritual magic created holes in the Umbra, and that the presence of those new vacuums helped to drive the Wyrm mad.

The Cult of Sutekh worshipped a god, or a vampire. Sutekh was a majestic creature, a god given human form, or a vampire serpent that could take any form that it wished. We don't know. Many times through history — until the diaspora, which we'll get to later — Sutekh arose, bringing fire and destruction with him. He might not have really been a vampire, but his hunger for the blood of innocents was nearly limitless. In later days he could not subsist on ordinary mortals, and he needed first the blood of particular kinds of mortals (virgins, or wizards), and later he could only feast on the blood and souls of those that had been specially prepared for him. The debate is still open as to whether Sutekh was a ravening monster before the Wyrm went mad. He was unquestionably



For More

For a longer discussion of Egypt in the World of Darkness, see **Rage Across Egypt** and **Cairo by Night**. Additional information on the same area during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries — from a **Vampire** perspective, at least — can be found in **Veil of Night**.

one afterwards. A number of cultists worshipped him – understandably, since he promised both temporal power and virtual immortality to those who served him loyally. Of course, he granted these things by turning such servants into vampires, but most of his cultists considered their souls to be a fair trade for eternal life.

Sutekh got his powers in the mists of prehistory; he was once a mortal king, or so the story has it. His foes were the ancient Pharaoh Osiris, his lover Isis, and their allies Anubis and Horus. After Sutekh became a god, he slew his brother Osiris, either raped Isis or turned her into another vampire (or both, we can't be sure), and went on to rampage throughout the Delta, slaughtering as he pleased. Somehow, with the help of the wizards I mentioned earlier, his enemies managed to bring Osiris back to life. In doing that they managed to write a ritual that could deceive the Wyrm of Balance: They made a rite that turned a human into an immortal.

It wasn't quite real immortality; the immortals could die. But their spirits would travel to Duat and then eventually rebuild their bodies and return to life. Their spirits could not be extinguished. This is a violation of Gaia's law, of course — that all things must die, and the dead must remain dead. But we had a problem, in ancient Egypt. We had four real enemies: spirits of the newly insane Wyrm, the Cult of Sutekh, the wizards, and these immortals. Something had to give. There simply weren't enough of us to fight all of those beings and still make certain that the humans were properly venerating Gaia.

The elders of the tribe decided that Sutekh was almost certainly more of a threat than any of the others, and decreed in the *Lay of the Wyrm-Foes*, which I can recite for you sometime, that the elimination of active Wyrm spirits was to be our main goal, after which we should target the Cult of Sutekh, retaliate against the wizards for their ignorant destruction, and only then go after the immortals.

And, not to admit that our ancestors were slack in following the dictates of the Litany and their elders, but the elimination of the immortals just simply wasn't a huge priority for them. The immortals weren't a danger to those around them, not in the way that the Wyrm and Sutekh's vampires were.

Death and the Underworld

Surely you know that the Silent Striders are the only Garou to regularly traffic in the lands of the dead. And "regularly" is quite an exaggeration. We enter the lands of the dead only on matters of urgency, whether to query a ghost for a lost secret or to attempt to recover a destroyed fetish.

There are twelve realms to the Egyptian spirit world, and most of them correspond to one realm or another in our traditional view of the Umbra. An awful lot of the twelve correspond to different parts of Malfeas or other hellish corners of the spirit world. One particular realm, Duat, is the Underworld, the land of the dead. The souls of dead Garou don't go there, and the souls of most humans don't go there either. Only a few human souls go there. We like to smile enigmatically and tell other Garou that we have mastered the power of life and death. We haven't, of course, but our most powerful elders do know how to enter Duat. It's a complex and powerful ritual.

We don't enter the Underworld casually. It's dangerous. Forget about the hungry, desperate ghosts; I'm talking about the environment itself. It's dead. There's nothing to eat — nothing that would sustain a werewolf, at least. And the storms that blow through the Underworld since the mid-1990s can rip you apart. Only enter the lands of the dead if you have a good reason. Here's a few examples to get you going down the right path.

At the young Hedgerow Caern in central Kansas, the Wary Knife pack was the only one to hold the information about cubs secretly growing up nearby. When that pack and a few of its Kinfolk were killed in an apartment fire and Wyrm attack, the sept lost all knowledge of nearby cubs. Ni'mah Sandhair, a Theurge of our tribe, went into the Underworld in pursuit of the Kinfolk, in the hopes that they could identify cubs before they were lost. It was a harrowing experience for her, but she returned with three names.

Right after the Gulf War, a pack of Striders found a group of human cultists that had been involved in igniting Kuwaiti oil wells. The cult fled, and our pack gave pursuit — the cult used some kind of fetish to open a portal to the Underworld and ran in. Our pack pursued, though they weren't sure they needed to — isn't fleeing into the Underworld a lot like suicide? But they felt they needed to be sure. They chased the cultists down, and eventually found them fighting off dozens of hungry ghosts. After the Garou were satisfied that the cultists had been destroyed, they returned to the land of the living.

And as a warning take to mind the example of Michael Far-Horizon, an aging and well-respected member of our tribe whose young Kinfolk wife died in childbirth. Far-Horizon chose to travel into the after-

life to see his beloved. He came back... broken. It isn't clear whether he was simply affected by the ghosts of Duat or whether it was the sight and feel of the place that harmed his soul. Far-Horizon has dropped past Harano into a nearly catatonic state. It is said that he lacks even the energy to commit an honorable suicide.

Lastly, be aware that the souls of the immortals travel to Duat after the deaths of their bodies. We've seen this happen more than once; the *Lament for the Undying* describes the immortals' greater souls, their long walk to Duat and eventual return into a newborn body. I don't know whether we can accompany them, or even if one would want to do such a thing. The immortals remain more enigma than anything else — I'm sure that cultivating a friendship with one would be useful, but don't let the conservatives in the other tribes find out if you do, as they tend to find the immortals to be blasphemers who deny Gaia's great law. Humans aren't meant to live forever — if they were meant to have that gift, they wouldn't have been given all the other ones that allowed them to prosper.

The Great Diaspora

As has been mentioned elsewhere, Sutekh — Set — was a god of the old Egyptians. During the most ancient times, our stories say, he walked openly among them. Some of the vampires tell us that Sutekh was or is a vampire; others tell us that he just created a bunch of vampires with his godly powers. I don't know; honestly I don't care that much, except to note that if he is a vampire, he's a god-vampire. Very, very powerful, with magic that can do practically anything.

We fought Sutekh and his minions throughout history in Egypt. The Striders on the steppe had little to do with those battles, and had their hands full with other business, but the Egyptians, the real core of the tribe, centered their lives on fighting Set's vampiric spawn. He churned them out freely. Little blood-drinking god-spawn who perverted whole villages to serve them and feed them. Wyrm monsters, undoubtedly. Our general opinion has always been that Sutekh is one of the mightiest avatars of the Wyrm on the face of Gaia. It was only our tribe's great sacrifice that has imprisoned him for as long as he has remained imprisoned.

The last time that Sutekh walked the earth, it was not a pack of Garou that rose to strike him, but rather a pair, one Garou and one... not exactly Garou. Shu-Horus was one of our greatest warriors; he vanquished dozens of enemies of Gaia and once defeated a Silver Fang king in single combat, only to renounce the crown that was his by right of challenge, to return home to Egypt to be with his people. His companion, Nephthys, was Strider Kinfolk who had learned the arts of sorcery and used them to extend her own life for centuries. Some whisper that Nephthys had used the vampiric blood of Sutekh's spawn to extend her life, but if nothing else I think that inverts the poetry of the tale, which is surely more metaphoric than historical.

Sutekh had begun a grand and terrible ritual. What precisely the ritual was depends on who you ask; some suggest that he intended to blot the moon from the sky; others say he wanted to turn the entire length of the Nile into his own vampiric ichor; and still others propose that he hoped to destroy another of the vampire-gods that then walked the earth. Whatever it was, Shu-Horus and Nephthys were the only ones who could stand against him. Nephthys used her magics to empower Shu-Horus with the might of a god, and the Strider warrior wounded Sutekh with his d'siah.

I know several stories that cover the next few hours, and they conflict in many places depending on who they were written to venerate. The best I can give you is this: Shu-Horus severely injured Sutekh, but rather than returning his blow, Sutekh went after Nephthys. He struck her down — as her magic had been depleted by empowering Shu-Horus — and then made her into a vampire. Shu-Horus managed to fight Sutekh almost to a standstill, and other Silent Striders sprung a trap, binding Sutekh into unconsciousness and imprisonment far underneath the earth. Sutekh's final words were his curse upon us:

By the names I have spoken, O Lupines, I curse you. I place my mark upon you, that you shall be forever severed from thy dead fathers and mothers. I damn you with my touch, that never again shall you rest in the lands of thy people. May the names of your ancestors be forgotten, and may their ghosts fade from hunger in the Duat. As I was cast out, so then shall you be exiled, voiceless and lost forevermore.

It took a full year for the effects of Sutekh's curse to spread over all of Egypt, starting along the banks of the Nile and expanding outward. The impression that I have gotten from some older stories is that the curse seems to really be linked to the name Egypt or its various translations — my nerdy Theurge friends suggest that this means that Sutekh uses name-based magic, a fact I mention only for completeness. As maps change and the idea of "Egypt" ebbs and flows, so too does the area covered by the curse. The curse hasn't changed much in the modern day, though some Striders reported some unease in the Sinai until as late as 1990.

You probably already know this: We can't sleep easily within Egypt anymore; nightmares of serpents and the screams of our ancestor-spirits plague us when we do so. We cannot regain Gnosis within Egypt. And we cannot channel our ancestor-spirits anymore. The Striders then in Egypt — at least half the tribe at the time, and

remember we're talking about a period some five thousand years ago — departed in ones and twos or by packs. When they encountered other Garou outside of Egypt, those Striders who were humble begged those Garou to travel to the Striders' old caerns and protect them from the forces of the Wyrm. Striders who were too proud to ask for aid simply walked on, never mentioning their tragedy.

As a result of the diaspora, at least a dozen Egyptian caerns were lost. The Bastet werecats took some of them. Egyptian wizards took some. The Wyrm took most of them. We scattered to the winds. Most Striders stayed in the lands surrounding Egypt: Palestine, modern Libya, the Holy Land and the Arabian Peninsula, and even as far as Persia. Most other Striders went to Europe, or went northwest and joined our kinsmen on the steppe. The tribe fell into collective despair, having lost its home and failed in its defense of its protectorate.

Many Striders fell into Harano, and many others wandered into the wilderness, never to be seen again. Others headed quite deliberately to lands unknown and strange to us. Some followed a moon bridge to what we would now call the Americas; a few packs went eastward along what would become the Silk Road, and more than a few ventured into the Deep Umbra.

In the generations following our exile from Egypt, a mute Theurge who was the first to take the name Nephthys in honor of our long-departed benefactress first wrote this prophecy. Variations of it have followed over the years.

I saw four deaths
One death
The shaper namer definer liar
The spider
Her legs ripped from her
Smothered by her web
The world crumbles
One death
The destroyer corrupter liar
The dragon
Impaled through the heart
Crushed beneath his hoard
The world starves
One death
The creator liar
The whirlwind
Quelled
Becalmed
The world freezes
One death
All three paths lead this way
The mother

The Beast Courts

The Silent Striders were not welcome in the Beast Courts of the far east — the "Middle Kingdom" as the Changers of that part of the world refer to themselves — until the Dark Ages. But the reports they brought back were scarcely believed. Only the Stargazers had ever had a large presence in the Far East, even in those early days, and they had abstained from the War of Rage. Striders who returned from the Beast Courts of the Middle Kingdom reported that Garou and Fera of all sorts cooperated in noble courts, each creature apparently knowing its role instinctively. The Striders were not welcome in the earliest days, and not all Garou who went east returned alive.

Over time — in the days after the fall of Rome, particularly, and later, the Silent Striders could travel along the Silk Road at least as far as Kashgar and not run into any problems at the hands of local shapechangers. The vampires and wizards of the East were quite different from those of the West as well, and seeing how the Beast Courts allowed members from all Changing Breeds, the Striders did not lash out at apparently Wyrm-tainted vampires or wizards when they were in the East. Our ancestors did not know for certain whether the Changers of the East were the vampires' allies. We have since learned that the Beast Courts consider the vampires of the Middle Kingdom to be as great a danger as we find the vampires of the West.

We did discover a number of incredibly tainted, extremely powerful Wyrm Pits in the Far East, in Manchuria and on the eastern Mongolian steppe. These are all within a hundred miles of one another, and are each more powerful than some 90% of the caerns in the United States. This would be another one of those secrets that we don't generally share with the other tribes; after all, they have their hands full. The Beast Courts know about the Pits, and while the kings and queens of their courts don't exactly share their secrets with vagrant foreigners, I haven't heard that there was a lot of movement to strike against these things so far.

The recent defection of the Stargazers to the Beast Courts has in many ways made our travels easier, for many Silent Striders can name an ally among the Stargazers and use that name to gain free passage through the Middle Kingdom. Additionally, the Stargazers themselves see no reason for hostility with their former companions from the West.

Most Silent Striders keep this prophecy to themselves, as they do most of their darkest knowledge. Most believe it to mean that the death of any one of the Triat will lead to Gaia's destruction, which means that a glorious final battle against the Weaver or the Wyrm, as the Get of Fenris and their ilk so desperately crave, will not forestall the Apocalypse, but rather hasten it.

From Then 'Til Now

The Roads of Rome

The Romans built roads. We traveled on them when it was convenient and when we were in the Empire. But we didn't have that much to do with the Empire proper; we weren't creatures of civilization. Rome was pleasant enough, I hear in the stories, but it wasn't so much a place for us. Next item.

Christ

Unlike most of the supernatural beings in the world — and I think I want to take a minute here and discuss that term, supernatural, because I don't know if it entirely applies to the Garou, but I'll come back to it — the Silent Striders were there in Israel when Yeshua ben Joseph walked the earth, speaking as the son of God. The Greeks transliterated the name in their own way and left him named Jesus.

All right, let's take for a moment as a given that we can somehow reconcile the idea of Gaia the Mother of All Things and this sky god Jehovah or Yahweh or Allah or what have you. I have to admit that the tales I hear from the time that Yeshua walked the earth are fascinating. The man had power. In the Umbra he coruscated with energy. He did... things... throughout the Holy Land, and our *Song of the Godwalker* suggests that he didn't even know what effect he was having on the spirit landscape as he moved through Israel. Caerns moved around in his wake. Moon Bridges redirected themselves or simply collapsed when he crossed them in the Realm. I will not suggest that Yeshua was the incarnation of everything good and spiritual in the universe, but I will say that Wyrm spirits wouldn't come within a mile of him. A mile.

Yeshua's presence in the Holy Land stirred up a lot of trouble with the local political authorities, which I won't get into, but it did the Garou some good. As I said, his presence in the Holy Land drove Wyrm spirits away from him. As he moved around, enterprising Striders were able to track and hunt Wyrm creatures that were driven out of his path against their will, including one nasty sluglike beast, Varok Urge-Yielder, that could hardly move at all and suffered horrible burns before a pack of Striders descended on it and carved it into tidy ten-pound chunks.

Mohammed

Unlike Christ, Mohammed didn't radiate majestic holy power in all directions. Of course, also unlike Christ, Mohammed never claimed to actually *be* part of his God. He simply claimed to have heard prophecies that God sent down. Mohammed was a simple merchant and traveler in greater Arabia until his encounter with an angel of God in 610, who spoke at length to him about God's plan for the world. Just as Yeshua accepted the history and teachings of the Jewish faith to be true but insufficient, Mohammed accepted the teachings of both Jewish and Christian faith to be true but insufficient. Mohammed went on to lead his people to conquest, and ruled over a wide area that was expanded by his successors.

Mohammed himself did not have a great direct affect on the activities of the Silent Striders, but his descendants and future followers reshaped the politics and beliefs of the entire Middle East. There were plenty of religions of the area that were at least faintly Gaia-friendly before the rise of Islam, but those who followed Gaian religion after Islam became prevalent found their views to be... unacceptable. They either converted wholesale, or, as many of our Kinfolk did, they pretended to convert and kept Gaian ritual secret from their neighbors. As is mentioned elsewhere, however, at least Islam takes the environment seriously.

Now I share with you another dark secret that the Silent Striders do not share with other Garou. Around the time the Mohammed was said to be receiving his angelic vision, a Silent Strider named Fire Walker received a prophecy from the spirit world. Fire Walker believed that the vision came from one of the gods of the Underworld — perhaps even one of the elder spirits of Duat, or something more malevolent.

The spirits showed Fire Walker a vision of Gaia from high above. Her body was consumed by fire, wracked by poison, and choked by smoke; the baleful Eye of the Wyrm shone high in the sky; and metis Garou capered about, endlessly coupling to no avail. Fire Walker believed that he was seeing the Prophecy of Phoenix, but this ran still darker. Great metal Wyrm creatures bit into Gaia's body, spilling Her blood across the most sacred sites of the world, poisoning caerns themselves. Soon, to his perceptions, Gaia died.

Yet still the remaining metis and homid Garou — for there were no lupus to be found — continued to fight the Wyrm and the Weaver wherever they could. The homids coupled with one another to produce metis warriors, thinking they only needed another few years to defeat the Wyrm once and for all, and save Gaia, but they had no idea that Gaia had already died and that their battle was in vain.

Fire Walker succumbed to Harano not long after receiving this vision, and many Theurges believe that dark spirits showed him this terrible future simply to drive him into Harano, taking a mighty and wise Garou warrior from Gaia's side. Do not tell other Garou of this prophecy, lest it turn out someday to be true and they blame the Silent Striders for keeping it from them for so many centuries.

The Caliphate

Our homeland is the birthplace of three of the world's biggest human religions, and countless minor cults and dead religions. Our tribe has historically been skeptical of new cults as they arise in the area. We have had no choice; they spring up with such regularity that if we were to investigate the source and true nature of each cult we would be distracted from our duties to the kings of the Garou Nation and more importantly Gaia Herself.

It was only when his presence began to be broadly felt throughout Arabia that we really noticed. Within a hundred years of Mohammed's death, the Islamic Caliphate had conquered and/or converted lands from the Atlantic Ocean to the Himalayas.

We had to come to terms with Islam at this point, just as we had to come to terms with Christianity when it rose to prominence within the Roman Empire. As I mentioned above, Islam itself is not hostile to Gaia, but its focus on a masculine sky-god as its godhead, rather than the Earth-Goddess who truly represents the state of the world, is fundamentally incompatible with our beliefs. We know that we're not going to bring humanity around to worshipping Gaia as they did in the ancient days — though, don't tell the other tribes we feel that way, because deep down I think that most of them feel that humans would worship Gaia if they could handle the truth. We know that's never going to happen.

Our best hope, throughout the last millennium, has been to blunt the worst conflicts between Muslims and Gaia worshippers. We have kept Muslims away from our holy sites, and we have left theirs alone — we don't go near Mecca, for instance; the Umbra around the Ka'aba is chaotic and unpredictable. The Gauntlet there is very high. Gaian and Wyrm spirits both avoid the site. We take this as an omen, and avoid it ourselves — although there is at least one song, *The Fate of Hamid Egg-Stealer*, that tells of a Ragabash who hid in the Umbra near the Ka'aba for a full month to avoid the pursuit of angry Wyrm creatures and Garou.

As the Caliphate grew and its rulers progressed through a series of dynasties, human Gaia-worshippers were forced to hide out in order to avoid persecution. This started late in the Abbasid Dynasty and has continued on and off since then. Silent Striders and our Kinfolk left signs in the Garou tongue throughout Dar al-Islam (roughly, "Islamic lands") pointing out good, safe hiding places for Gaian travelers. By the modern day the only ones of these that remain are those along remote roads, far from human habitation — for as the human population has expanded, humans have found our hidey-holes, and destroyed our caches of supplies (as well as any emergency talens that might be left within them). Our remaining hiding places have been the site of Gaia's worship for centuries now — sure, it's infrequent worship, but they are shelters that provide solace within the nurturing arms of the One True Goddess. Most of these places have thin Gauntlets, and some are even glades.

Nomads of the Steppe

We had a lot of Kinfolk among the nomads of the Central Asian steppe. We had been wandering around that part of the world for all of known history, as we had claimed the right to cull the nomads during the Impergium and had never really left, when the dominant nomads were the Xiongnu, the Avars, or the Mongols. There was no tribe we couldn't keep up with, and no real need for us to leave them alone, as they encountered the Wyrm and Weaver even more often in their wanderings than Garou might have found just staying within the protectorate of one sept.

When nomadic tribes of the steppe moved around, they carried their homes with them. These homes — most people today call them "yurts" but they have had plenty of other names and the correct name is *ger* — were made to be taken apart and rebuilt when the clan stopped for the night. But the very largest *ger*, those of the Khans and their most respected followers and shamans, weren't taken apart during the day. They were too big. Instead, they sat on huge wooden platforms, and rolled along on logs, as slaves or pack animals pulled them. Now, every *ger* was a sacred space to the humans, who worshipped a sky god and an earth goddess very much like Gaia. We have legends that at least one of these *ger* was actually tied to the service of Gaia; its clan was composed largely of Kinfolk and Silent Striders themselves. I am talking about a mobile caern here, understand. This thing could move around. Not *easily*, and it had to be pulled or pushed by *something*, but I am *talking* about a *mobile caern*.

Of course, the Umbra was different in those days and in that part of the world, and the Gauntlet was a lot thinner. I can't imagine that the caern was very powerful, and although the stories conflict as to what totem spirit shepherded it, most of the Striders' versions attach Owl herself to the caern. It was definitely a Silent Strider caern, though, as we had more kinfolk among the steppe nomads than anybody else did. At least one of the stories says that the Caern of Long Voyages could only travel

on certain paths, "spirit lines" or "dragon roads" or similar mistranslated Chinese crap, but still.

It came to a regrettable end. In around 1300 the Caern of Long Voyages was pressed into service in support of a large scale assault on the minions of a Zmei somewhere in southern Russia. This was not a caern of war. The story of Alit Three-Day-Run, who made it from the caern when it was on the shores of the Black Sea to Kiev in three days, suggests that it might have been a caern of stamina. But Garou should never risk a caern directly, as that battle showed; the caern and the Garou of its wandering sept were all lost, casualties of war. That battle also destroyed the only Garou who knew the details of the caern's creation, and of course since they were Silent Striders, once they died they were lost to us forever.

The Dark Ages

Our homeland was the target for several European Crusades during the Dark Ages. Over and over again the armies of Europe hurled themselves at the heathens of what they called the Outremer in an attempt to "retake" Jerusalem, as though the savages of 13th century Europe had ever controlled their Holy Land for themselves. Inevitably the Crusades brought the Wyrm with them, and in an unpleasant sort of cross-fertilization, the Wyrm beasts of the Holy Land began to hang onto the Crusaders as they went back and forth, and the Crusaders brought their own fetid monsters with them. Vampires were the least of the creatures that traveled back and forth with the Crusaders, but you can be sure that the Cult of Sutekh found plenty of opportunities to infiltrate further into Europe and spread the word of their vile master.

Of course, the Crusaders' traveling back and forth also gave us a lot of room to maneuver, and we expanded our own trading and traveling networks into southeastern Europe a great deal at that time. We began to associate more regularly and closely with the Rroma in Europe then, as well, and as you know many of our Kinfolk still hail from that group.

In the Caliphate, our greatest collective concern was another human cult, the Circle of Red, and a plague that they unleashed upon the Garou, which the werewolves of the time referred to as the Flaying Plague. We don't have many records of the Flaying Plague, but at the time that it took place it was a serious concern for the Striders in particular. The Plague could be passed from Garou to Garou and the Silent Striders, as the chief travelers of the Garou Nation, were considered to be the main agent for passing the infection around. Whole septs closed themselves to outsiders, lest they be infected, and a few traveling packs of Silent Striders were ambushed by panicked Garou of other tribes.

The Striders eventually destroyed the Circle of Red, but never found the source of the plague that the group had allegedly spread it, nor even any cultic rituals that might have suggested that they were responsible for it. Regardless, by the dawn of the fourteenth century the plague had abated and the Garou were no worse for wear.

I have mentioned before that our tribe rode with the warriors of the steppe, and they came with the Xiongnu — the Huns — when they swept in to destroy the last vestiges of Rome. A thousand years later the barbarians of the steppe returned to slice at Europe's belly, and we ran with them. The Garou have always been territorial creatures, and when the Striders accompanied the Mongols as they slaughtered their way through the principalities of Russia and the Balkans, the Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords were up in arms. Those two tribes, along with members of other tribes who paid them fealty, defended their home caerns and the hunting grounds they claimed as their own. The Mongols were fierce and talented warriors, and killed a few of the cockiest Garou. After a few of these sorts of battles, the Mongols learned to avoid Garou holy sites and concentrate their fury on human settlements, which they did with style and aplomb. More than one old Silent Strider Ahroun made a name for himself during the thirteenth century, though, showing the older tribes that the Striders sure as hell could fight when they had reason.

America

The Silent Striders did not lead the way to America. After the diaspora, three packs of Striders made their way across a moon bridge into the lands of the Uktena, Croatan, and Wendigo, but they never returned; the Pure Ones sent back a spirit carrying a Strider's ear as a message that they did not wish to be disturbed further. After the destruction that the tribe had faced during the war leading up to the diaspora, it was in no condition to avenge this new setback by opening a war bridge and assaulting the Pure Ones. We had to hope that the three tribes would protect their homeland more skillfully than we ourselves had done.

We returned to America not long after the Europeans did, in the early sixteenth century. A few of the older and more conservative Striders still held a grudge against the Pure Ones, and it took around a dozen challenges to finally settle the question of what had happened to our packs. The Pure Ones had kept the Americas largely free of Wyrm taint for thousands of years, and had no interest in allowing other Garou to drag the Wyrm in along with them. The Wendigo and Uktena had simply killed the Striders that came to their caerns; the Croatan welcomed them, under the condition that the Striders renounce their old tribe and gain acceptance from Turtle. We learned that indeed our once-tribemates turned away from Owl and toward Turtle, to join their new companions. One of their descendants was one of the Garou that sacrificed themselves to destroy Eater-of-Souls, so in the balance I believe they made the right choice.

America is... a big subject. Europeans who settled America saw it as a big empty land, filled only with savages and natural resources. The natives saw it as their home, and most felt that they were being invaded by monstrous beings practically from another world. The Europeans and European Garou brought their Wyrm monsters across the Atlantic with them, to the shock and horror of the Pure Ones. The Striders weren't attached to too many Kinfolk as they came across – the Rroma didn't come until later, and Arabs and other central Asians didn't come in great number until the twentieth century. So we, erm, made our own Kinfolk as we explored the Americas. In modern America, as a result, there are some few Native Americans with a jackal-lookin' werewolf in the family tree, though of course most of them don't know it.

It's funny, really. The Silent Striders were the first of the so-called Wyrmbringer tribes to learn about the Pure Ones' greatest secret. The Americas weren't free of Wyrm taint before our arrival here; the Pure Ones just hid it well, and fought it to a standstill when it did pop up. And the Uktena, in particular, had bound literally dozens of massive, earthquake-sized Wyrm monsters under the earth. We found the Uktena who bound the creatures; we found the creatures. Now, we didn't unleash the creatures, and as far as we know they're still there. But we sure as hell sold that secret for a good price to the incoming Beast Kings of America.

The wide-open spaces of North America always appealed to our kinsmen. Their interest waned a bit after the railroads spiked the country together from coast to coast – we felt that the last of the unexplored wilderness was vanishing – but with the advent of the automobile that changed again. Where it used to be that you had to follow the Weaver's railroads or take months to cross the US, by the Second World War the United States were almost manageably sized. We could travel anywhere we wanted, and take as long as we wanted. As biker, trucker, and RV enthusiast culture became more prevalent, we found more and more kindred souls in our journeys: the people who were just along for the ride.

The Twentieth Century

Most of the following information comes from Abad "Tommy" Ringfinger, a long-haul truck driver in the United States. Tommy was born in 1910, and as much as any living Garou has seen the century.

I can't give you a history of the Silent Striders in the Twentieth Century. Cripes, the century only ended a couple of months ago. What? 2003? All right, a couple of years ago, I think I still have a point. And anyway, the history of the Striders is the history of the world. We're everywhere. What? No, not Asia, good Gaia, the crazy yellow werewolves and weretigers and whatever-all they have over there would rip you in half, why I remember back in the Second World War when I was in the Philippines... What? Oh, all right.

The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire controlled most of the Middle East until the Great War. It wasn't a really strong power, though. It was corrupt and weak, practically doddering. You watch your language, don't think I didn't hear that! Through that whole time, spies and explorers were making off with treasures that would make your back hair fall out, usually by... what? You don't have back hair? Anyway, back in those days the Striders spent a lot of their time just making sure that our caerns throughout the empire didn't get looted. Anytime you hear about an explorer who swore up and down that he saw Anubis, he probably ran into one of ours.

This was when I was very young, before my First Change, mind you, but we did lose one caern, in the Ottoman Empire, to stupidity. It was in Egypt. We didn't really take up residence in Egypt, you know full well why, don't pretend you don't. So it wasn't really us that lost the caern. But a couple of packs of Get of Fenris were off on patrol or something — partying with some of the locals, maybe, they wouldn't talk about it — and a group of English explorers found the tomb complex that made up the core of the caern. A very small caern by the standards of the day, even pretty small by modern standards. By the time the Get got back a few days later, the damned Englishmen may as well have pissed all over the place. Utterly destroyed it, spiritually. The relics and tomb bits were mostly sent to museums and private collections in England. I expect they're still there. Probably a few fetishes among them.

The End of Empire

Like I said before, the Ottoman Empire was the place that you could find the most Silent Striders. We were all over the world, even then, but in those days getting from place to place wasn't a snap like it is today. Of course, heh, we had the Wheel, even then, so as long as we could find a friendly caern we could usually get where we needed to go... I see you're giving me stern looks. The point is that until around the Second World War there weren't many Striders in the Americas, and in Europe, Africa, and Asia we were concentrated in the Middle East, in the Ottoman Empire. That's where I was born.

The rulers of the empire, the *family name*, were pretty corrupt. I mean that in the dishonest, nasty, selfish sense, not the Wyrmish sense. They were the kind of self-serving hereditary authorities that make the Silver Fangs look good by comparison. What? Oh, what are they going to do to me? I'm ninety-three, and I've killed more Wyrm servants than they can.... Anyway, a lot of them escaped Lawrence's rebels when the war was coming to an end. We didn't have a lot of interest in the human governments of the area — we just wanted to be able to travel around without getting hassled. We wanted to make sure that whoever was in charge would help us keep the humans out of our sacred spaces and make sure that they weren't thralls of the Wyrm or the Cult of Sutekh.

We found out after the fact that a number of the minor functionaries of the Empire were dug in pretty heavily with the Cult of Sutekh. They escaped the Empire intact. Plenty of them resettled in the States, and we know... well, I'll save that for later. Anyway. The British and French took over the Empire, and they gave a lot of it to the Hashemites to rule. Conveniently enough, we had a lot of Kinfolk among the Hashemites.

Between the Wars

I left the area just before the Germans arrived. It was a busy couple of decades. In the twenties we had Carter's rape of a few more of Egypt's secrets and the fallout from Balfour's declaration, but most of my attention and my pack's attention was focused on another cult. The cult's name is in Arabic; it translates to Tooth of the Eternal Maw. Yes, boy, I said "is," not "was," I'm glad you're listening to me. I'll get there, give me a minute.

You probably watched too many movies as a kid, I can tell from looking at you, but most Egyptians are not death-obsessed cultists. The interest in death and the afterlife that the ancient Egyptians seem to have had, if you ask my opinion — and you did! — is just obvious to us because it's one of the only things that survived. If they had built lasting enormous monuments to their birds then human scientists would assume that they were an avian-obsessed society. The tombs are all that survived, so we assume that that's what they cared about. Gaia only knows what future people will think about modern Americans, with your hula hoops and your rock and roll and your personal digital assistants.

My pack and I were the first ones to run into the Eternal Maw cult, and unfortunately, they were the sort of people who gave Hollywood the idea. As far as we could tell, ghosts regularly possessed around half of them, and all of them were obsessed with their ancestors. Most of the cult believed that the ghosts doing the possessions were their ancestors, but if that's the case then we ran into the most bloody destructive, slaver-

ing clot of common ancestors that there's ever been. My pack's Theurge was sure that the ghosts were just random ghosts who happened upon these poor suckers.

The human cultists and the ghosts all worshipped death. They wanted to be part of the eternal destroyer — they had lots of names for it, the Devourer, the Destroyer, the Dragon, the Oblivion, the Great End, and so forth. They wanted to kill everyone. They had plenty of grand plans for accomplishing this, including the demolition of the first Aswan Dam (and later, its huge cousin); poisoning the Nile (they tried that plenty of times); and on one memorable occasion, trying to redirect or dry the Nile up, to kill off most of Egypt. So I guess these guys wanted to join the Great Destroyer only *after* they had sent everyone *else* up there first. I seem to remember that they didn't think of their Destroyer in the same way that we think of the Wyrm, and they had no idea what the Triat was, but there is no doubt in my mind that their Destroyer was our Wyrm. The cultists all stank of the Wyrm, possessed or not.

They sprang up again and again, too. Every time we thought we had them stamped out, they'd cart half a ton of explosives into the middle of Cairo or something. They went quiet during the war — I heard that they had turned members of the German High Command, but then again, I heard a million stupid rumors about what ghosts and monsters were doing during the war. They popped up again after the war, and like I said, they tried to blow up the High Aswan Dam in the mid-seventies. I'm sure they're still around, I keep hearing stories about the U.S. Govern... what? Cheeky bastard, I'd never give my elders a look like that when I was a cub.

War and Crime

Our Kinfolk were slaughtered by the thousand during the Second World War. That number includes one of my wives and two of our children. They were Rroma — or, I suppose, half-Rroma, half Arab. Half werewolf, too. Anyway. The Nazis killed six million Jews. And five and a half million of everybody else. We had Jewish Kinfolk, we had Rroma — Gypsy, I can tell from the dull look on your cub faces, is the term you might recognize — we had Rroma Kinfolk, we had socialists and homosexuals and travelers and Gaia-worshippers. Asocial, work-shy slackers. No room for them in the Nazi machine except to grease the gears, which they did.

The Get of Fenris might tell you that they fought the Nazis. Eleven million people died and the Get of Fenris didn't lift a god damned finger. I know a few who cheered. After all, their Kinfolk were blond-haired blue-eyed Aryans. Remember that next time you're looking for shelter at a Get caern.

Why do you have such a strange look on your face? Old men aren't allowed to have political opinions? Or are we just supposed to agree with your sept's leaders all the time? Feh.

Israel and Palestine

After the war, and after the Holocaust, Jews started to come to Palestine in great numbers. The Holocaust had given the Zionist movement a whole lot more interest. Now, Palestine was a British holding at that point, but the conflicts between the Zionists and the Arabs in Palestine made it a place that the British didn't want to rule. This is around the time that my pack and I left the Middle East to come to America, so I don't know a lot of what went on there firsthand. I didn't see the war between the Israelis and the rest of the Arab world that came after the British left.

I heard things, though. I heard that there started being some real trouble on the other side of the Gauntlet, down in the Dark Umbra — that more ghosts than there shoulda been were hanging on, and that they weren't all that... stable. For a while there, some of the Striders who passed through the area were talking about some kind of strange mind-sickness, some fever that got into the dead. Never heard anything more than that, though. And it don't do to spread hearsay when your allies are expecting hard information, so don't go blabbing.

High Aswan Dam

The Nile was always a "problem" for the people of Egypt. The kind of problem that gives you fertile fields to plow, gives you fresh water to drink, and a navigable waterway. Yes, it flooded periodically, but that's Gaia's way. It isn't the Weaver's way, and so more modern governments wanted to try and take the edge off of the Nile's cycle. Around the end of the 19th century, the old Empire decided to put a dam up near Aswan. It was a pretty modest thing, relatively small. It wasn't strong enough to really hold back the waters of the Nile when she wanted to get to the Med, though, and so the leaders had to occasionally flood the farmers who'd been told that the dam would solve all their problems.

The High Dam at Aswan was started after the Second World War, and it wasn't completed until the 1970s. It made a huge lake — Lake Nasser — and it drowned hundreds of square miles. Yes, plenty of Egyptians got electricity out of the deal, and the dam was so huge that the farmers downstream to the north had no more worries about floods. But Gaia rebelled against the dam.

Wyld and Wyrm spirits are drawn to the dam. They cavort in the spiritual energy that roils around the mere *possibility* that it might be destroyed and kill millions. Even now, thirty or so years after its construc-

tion, the dam is a point of contention among the Garou. The Red Talons want it gone. So do many of the more fundamentalist Fera further into the continent. The Glass Walkers and the Bone Gnawers and the Children of Gaia provide the usual blah blah blah about leading humankind to Gaian virtues and not just randomly killing truckloads of them. For the time being we're generally agreed that no one is going to try and destroy the dam without checking with the other tribes first. A few packs of the more modernist persuasion have taken it onto themselves to occasionally patrol the dam and watch out for marauding spirits and Wyrm servants. Every few months they do find something, so a few years ago some enterprising Theurges actually bound some Gaian spirits to the dam itself in the hopes of getting a bit of warning before anything bad happens. It's worked so far.

Islamic Fundamentalist Revolution

Radical fundamental Islam didn't really start to get hold of the Arab world this century until the corrupt, useless, and probably Wyrm-touched Shah of Iran had to give up his propped-up tenement of a government and flee for his life in the face of an Islamic revolution. The United States and the Soviet Union propped up Islamic states, whether overtly revolutionary or just generally Muslim, for decades, regardless of whether those states were generally ethical and treated their people well or whether they were merely convenient game pieces.

All right. So, about Islam. We're the Garou who are most familiar with it, and since late '01 I know that I've been getting a lot of passers through who want to ask me questions about it. I'll try and answer the obvious ones for you so that the next time some smarmy American Glass Walker passing through the Wheel has a pantsload of questions you can take care of them for me. I'm old. I have cigarettes that have to get smoked.

On the face of it, one of the biggest differences between Islam and Christianity is that in the humans' stories, Jesus had the good grace to ascend to Heaven after passing on his most important lessons. Mohammed stuck around for decades, surrounded by sycophants who at least claimed after the fact to have written down everything he said. So while the Christians' New Testament is fairly short and readable, there are volumes of what everyone agrees Mohammed said, and other volumes of what everyone agrees that someone else says he heard Mohammed say, and so on. The hearsay is called the *hadith* and they get more radical as they get less reliable.

The important question for Garou is: How compatible is Islam with our laws and the laws of Gaia? The answer is that it depends. Unlike the Catholic Church, there is no central figure of authority in Islam, and there hasn't been for more than a millennium. There are just clerics and groups of clerics, each having its own general ideas about what Mohammed said that God wanted. And of course, there is no central authority to Gaian doctrine either. A liberal Silent Strider Ragabash and a liberal Sunni cleric will get along well enough, despite their core disagreement as to the identity of the supreme being. Extreme conservatism on either side will get you into trouble.

Mohammed did say "the whole of the Earth is a mosque that is a place of worship," and many Muslims do try to live as stewards of the environment, paying respect to their vision of the creator and his laws. They aren't Earth First or anything, but they do all right if they're sincere about what they're doing. I suppose they're much the same as religious humans all over the world in that regard.

Black Tooth and the Ahadi

On the other side from the liberal viewpoint I mentioned earlier we have Black Tooth. Now, like I said, I spent most of the years from the end of the war until around my ninetieth birthday in the United States, so I wasn't around for most of Black Tooth's, ah, reign. But here's the story like I heard it.

Black Tooth was a strong young werelion that had decided it was high time to bring back some form of the Impergium. He was very conservative when it came to Gaia's laws; he thought that the oil companies and mining companies and genocidal warlords throughout Africa were in violation of those laws in some way or another, and he took decisive, violent action against all of them. Somewhere along the line he also decided that he was the Beast King of Africa.

He and the Endless Storm, his pack, or pride, or whatever they call them, rampaged across Africa for fifteen years. From a distant perspective they did a lot of good, that's the thing that makes this hard. They conquered the vampires of Africa below the Sahara (and used them!); they killed the wizards; they banished the ghosts. They gave Endron and the other massive oil companies a run for their money. They used a lot of tactics that the current American administration would probably declare war on, terrorizing employees, blowing up facilities, and all that. But they also announced that the other shapechangers of Africa were to be under their leadership, whether they wanted to or not.

So the Endless Storm attacked other cat-changers, hyena-changers, crocodile-people, and so on, to force them to declare their loyalty to Black Tooth. When the Endless Storm came further north, they even fought with Silent Striders. By this time I had retired, of course, but I heard stories from some of my old students that the werelions were massive, fast, experi-

enced, and fought dirty. Very tough customers, and as you probably know we Silent Striders are not exactly warriors among warriors. We lost some territory to the Endless Storm, but they didn't have a lot of interest in sticking around in the Middle East and the Sahara, where they didn't have any territory or Kinfolk.

Over time a group of shapechangers from across Africa came together, quietly spreading the word that Black Tooth was unfit to rule and a tyrant. The group became known as the Ahadi and was led by the cutest young hyena-changer you'll ever run into. Kisasi. She's the cutest young hyena-changer you'll ever run into. Kisasi. Looks every inch the warrior, without skimping on the feminine... what? It's not a sin to admire the womanly form! All right. She was a strong leader, and got plenty of Garou and other Fera to her cause. About two years ago, she gave some Striders in northern Africa proof that Black Tooth was consorting with the Cult of Sutekh, and even provided us with some information that led our Arm of Horus pack and several other packs to ferret out a powerful cultist vampire and its spawn ranging across much of north Africa. All right, he wasn't exactly consorting with them. He was using them. Rumor has it that the Endless Storm found a cache of little ceramic jars with vampire hearts in them, and used the hearts as blackmail against the Cult of Sutekh when they came to investigate. Black Tooth got the vampires working for him. Nicely done, if you want the truth, even if the little bastard deserved what he got in the end. In any case, while we destroyed the vampires, the rest of the Ahadi came down on the Endless Storm and their lackeys.

Black Tooth is dead; so is the rest of his pride. The Ahadi continues. Kisasi has a lot of influence right now among the Changers of Africa, from the Mediterranean to Cape Town. She has challengers, particularly among the Simba, but the werelions seem to be aware that they have some of the blame for Black Tooth's dominance and so they don't press their case too eagerly. Many Fera trust Kisasi, though, and they at least use her as a clearing-house for information about the Wyrm. The Ahadi has led the Silent Striders to work more closely with the Bubasti cat-changers in Egypt and Northern Africa, and we have been exchanging more and more information with the Swara. Sometime soon, I'm sure that somebody's going to fuck things up and set us all back at each other's throats, but for the time being it's almost pleasant to just focus on the Wyrm.

Gulf War

Like I said earlier, during the Cold War the United States and the Soviet Union used the whole Middle East as their chessboard. They propped up regimes that had no redeeming value at all, just because those regimes were poised against other countries controlled by the other side. Iraq was one of those. The United States fed Iraq money and guns and all sorts of other shit, and after the Russians were out of the picture the US gave Iraq the idea that it would be okay for them to go take the Kuwaiti oil fields. So they did, and then the US and the rest of the world seemed to suddenly decide that Hussein was a maniac who needed to be stopped. All right, well, you know the story, armies from all over the place descended on Saudi Arabia and invaded Iraq and spanked Hussein and then wandered off.

What Americans don't hear so much about is how Hussein made sure to shit the bed before he left Kuwait. Kuwait has been a ten-year mess for the Garou, and for the first few years all the other tribes decided that Kuwait was just a Silent Strider problem, so we have had our hands full there. You see, Hussein's armies detonated more than 700 oil wells as they retreated from Kuwait. In the average

Killing A Burning Oil Well

The Red Talons had for years advocated blowing up oil wells throughout the Middle East, and the Harsh Winter pack in particular had been stirring up trouble around the Endron fields in the Burgan complex in Kuwait. Plenty of Garou explained to the Talons that detonating a well would cause far more environmental damage than the drilling itself caused, but the Talons made some fairly persuasive arguments that the damage caused by the transport, refinement, distribution, and use of the oil from a single well did more damage than a year-long oil fire.

In the end, Hussein's people made the decision for us. Whatever the cause, the solution was mostly put into place by contractors from around the world. Most of them were American, but there were Kuwaitis, Canadians, Chinese, and others involved in the work.

It was extremely tricky work even ignoring the Wyrm creatures festering in the oil lakes and capering in the fires. First the well head and the surroundings had to be cooled down to the point where humans could operate in the area. Most of the teams used thousands of gallons of high-pressure water from hundreds of yards away. Then something had to be done to put out the fire. Two options included bringing in a stack on a crane to "dislocate" the fire, pushing it 30-40 feet up into the air; and mounting huge Soviet jet engines on huge Soviet tanks to suck all the oxygen out of the immediate vicinity, extinguishing the fire. After that the engineers had to lock the well head down and stop the gusher. All of this was complicated by land mines and booby traps left behind by the forces of the Wyrm — I'm sorry, I meant "the Iraqi army." My mistake.

case ten thousand barrels of oil burned per day, or poured out into the sand and down into the aquifer or out into the Persian Gulf. Each well sent a column of fire a quarter mile into the air and blackened the sun for miles around.

Things got worse from there, too. It took months to get all of the wells extinguished, and between that thing and Mount Pinatubo blowing up, the weather that year was a real mess.

Due to the dark magics flowing around many of the well fires, there were Garou or Kinfolk involved in fully a third of the well cappings. There were Wyrm spirits dancing and cavorting at nearly all of the well fires. To this day, if you happen to encounter an oil-industry engineer who's turned to the Wyrm within the last decade, expect that he was in Kuwait. We had Garou or Kinfolk involved at some stage of nearly all of the cappings, and I understand that hundreds of them felt the touch of the Wyrm.

Something else was going on, too. Now, I was only in my eighties while this was happening, so I did occasionally go out with a young pack of Garou to keep my bones limber. This must have been around October or so of '91. We toured a few of the fires, if you know what I mean, and I noticed that there was a lot of Gnosis — black, polluted, filthy shit — flowing along lines between some of the sites. I didn't really have time to make a map or anything, but I have heard that other older Garou noticed the same thing.

I have to wonder if the lines of flow made a message of some kind. Maybe something visible from high above, in the Umbra. A signal beacon or a message. And it wasn't too many years later by my reckoning that Garou first started to notice Anthelios. It would sure be interesting to figure out who plotted the locations of those oil wells, and who was responsible for which detonations as the Iraqis retreated. I bet they know more than we do.

But I'm just a crotchety old retired truck driver, what the hell do I know?

There are still a lot of Wyrm spawn lurking out in the deserts of Kuwait. We are talking about an oil spill a hundred times bigger than the Valdez. The Wyrm's bubble bath. In the last year or two we've gotten some attention from Konietzko's Shadow Lords in the Balkans. Seems he's stretching out his fingers. He wants to "help us" with the problem. We're tentatively "letting" him help us.

The Road Before Us: The Apocalypse

Spirits of the Road

Overheard at the Wheel of Ptah

"By my figurin', any active pack of Garou has to awaken the spirit of a car, bus, motor home, motorcycle, tractor-trailer, whatever, every few months. Say, four times a year. Say there are two hundred packs of active, adventuring, crazy werewolves in the world. Maybe that's not conservative enough, but let's not have that argument right now. Two hundred packs, awakening a vehicle's spirit four times a year each. Eight hundred spirits a year. Ten thousand spirits since the Gulf War.

"Gets you thinkin'. Car's been around since, what, 1910? That's got to be fifty thousand car spirits out there. Talkin' to a Bone Gnawer the other night, lives in a junkyard. He says there's lots more cars out there dead than alive, so to speak, and the spirits of the dead cars got nowhere to go, nothin' to do.

"That's a lot of Gnosis floating around shaped into the idea of a car. And Car — in America, I mean, not so much in other parts of the world — isn't really a Weaver spirit. Car's always been a thing of freedom. Lets you go where you want. People who really love cars tinker with 'em, fuck with 'em all the time, too. I'm not sayin' we're going to be seeing a pack of Garou that follows Car, but I bet it won't be long before you can summon car spirits up without a car on hand. Ever tried?"

The Red Star

In 1999 a new star appeared in the Umbral skies. We call it Anthelios, the Eye of the Wyrm. It is part of the Prophecy of the Phoenix, and its arrival has brought terrible change to the world already.

Storm in the Underworld

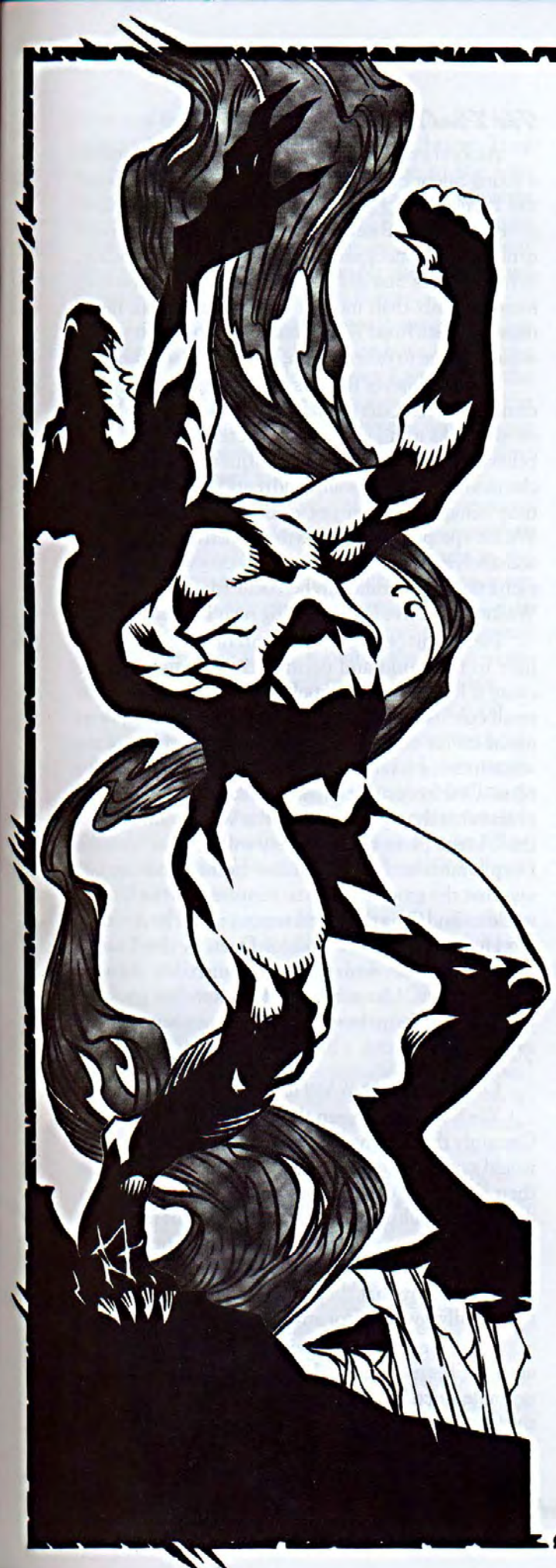
Overheard at the Wheel of Ptah, January 2003

It was a god. I'm serious. No, I wasn't there, I was in Israel when it started, but I came here right after, ah, a little bird told me something was going on. Strange how it felt safer in Tel Aviv. This place was a beehive, Garou shuttling in and out. I think Morningkill came through at one point. Yeah, Sarah, I'm sure that we're still owed back chiminage for it.

It warped the landscape for dozens of miles in every direction. Whole packs went in and never came out again. I heard the vampires even threw some of theirs at it, which means that it must have been bad for business. Or at least the blood supply, yeah, Sarah.

And whatever it was, it wasn't all here in the land of the living. It was half in the Underworld. It set a storm going there that's still raging in some places. Huge storm. Winds so fierce that they yanked ghosts out of their homes and threw them back into their bodies. Yeah, I know that sounds like a fairy tale, but one of the ghosts that follows me around vanished for a few weeks and showed up in his body. No, his actual body. His corpse. Yes, Sarah, he was half rotted away. Thankfully I convinced him to leave me alone.

Not all the ghosts have gone home yet. Seems like more of them are closer to the living world than they ever were before, too.



What, the god? No, I don't know which god it was. With all the storms, and its location, I wonder if it was Indra himself. I know that sounds idiotic to say – he was the leader of the Indian gods, Sarah. Thunder and storms, too. Anyway, I know it sounds idiotic to say, but it fits the profile. I really hope there aren't a few hundred other gods waiting to wake up in other parts of the world.

Plenty of werewolves came to the Wheel to recover afterwards. It's easy to reach. They said that the rite the other Garou used to destroy the thing was so powerful that it reminded them of the old footage of nukes going off. No, no, the ones who performed the rite all died. They won, though. Might have been one of our greatest battles.

Young Immortals

Overheard at the Wheel of Ptah, July 2002

Oh, yeah, I've seen 'em. Immortals. Always figured they were a joke or a legend — there was a Ragabash I knew who called 'em mummies. They were... well, if you believe the stories, and I don't see a reason not to, they were created to fight Sutekh's cult in old Egypt. An old king, his court, his wife, his warriors, all of them. They were made immortal by some concoction or ritual, so that they could keep Sutekh's monsters from destroying the world, and fight as long as it took.

Now, I'm not talkin' about immortal like a vampire is immortal. Those fuckers aren't immortal on the end of your klaive, know what I'm sayin'? But these guys, you can cut their heads off and set their bodies on fire, and then piss in the ashes, and after enough centuries they will. Come. Back.

Anyway. Seems like there are more of them lately. Don't know what that means. I'm tryin' not to blame it on the goddamned Eye of the Wyrm, because that's getting old, you know? And they seem to have more power now — immune to the Delirium and calling down holy hellfire and all kinds of other shit — but they seem a lot more clueless, too. They don't know what or who we are. I don't know, maybe the guys we're seeing aren't immortals. They look like ordinary humans, though. No scent of the Wyrm on them. Not that necessarily means anything...

The New Children

Overheard at the Wheel of Ptah, a lesson to cubs, September 2001

Bennu was the first. She was born in 1981, and went through her Rite of Passage somewhat late, in 1998. At the culmination of her Rite, Bennu manifested the personality and voice of an ancient Silent Strider warrior, Shu-Horus, whose name had previously only been spoken in half-remembered ballads.

The skills of Shu-Horus allowed the neophyte Bennu to destroy several old vampires of the Cult of Sutekh.

This news stunned the elders of the tribe. The Curse of Sutekh long ago exiled our ancestor-spirits. We had little evidence that it had not actually *destroyed* our ancestor-spirits. For one year, Bennu was the only one who heard the ancestor-spirits. The tribe's elders surrounded her with warriors, all of whom swore to die rather than let the Wyrm or the Cult of Sutekh touch her. When she did rest, Theurges from hundreds of miles in all directions came to her, praying for insight. Precious little insight came — at least, none of the Theurges ever reported anything beyond the obvious. Then the Eye of the Wyrm opened. Now Bennu is not alone. Others — cubs, and very few of them, but no older Garou that we know of — have begun to hear from the ancestors.

Very few ancestor-spirits have spoken, as of yet. The only ones we have seen have been ancient, most having died before the Curse of Sutekh. They do not recognize the modern world; they do not speak any modern human language and their dialect of the High Tongue is hard to understand at times. And they are not... chatty. They come to their descendants in time of great need, and the need of the Striders' elders to understand what the hell's going on is apparently not great enough for them.

That hasn't stopped the rumormongering and theorizing as to why this has happened. Most of us believe that the change relates to the storms that passed through the Underworld a few years ago. We have always assumed that our ancestor-spirits' home was somehow connected to the Realm of Death, and the storms blew ghosts out into the physical world. It would be no surprise if it also sucked ancestor-spirits out of their home. There is a darker suggestion, though.

Garou have been encountering vampire warriors of the Cult of Sutekh less frequently since Bennu began to hear the voices of our ancestors. At the same time, I have heard of shared nightmares of a tiny owl being crushed by a vast and blind serpent. I don't know what is happening exactly, but we think that Sutekh may have broken the bonds that our ancestors placed on him so many thousands of years ago. If he did, though, we received no warning. The bonds were shattered, perhaps casually. He hasn't come after anyone – he hasn't exploded into a hurricane of fury like the godling that awoke in Pakistan a few years ago.

We tend rather arrogantly to think of ourselves as Sutekh's greatest foe, and as the greatest source of irritation to him. What if we're wrong? What if he woke up, broke the bonds, and let his exile of our spirit ancestors fade away because we're irrelevant? If we're his greatest enemy and he doesn't think we're worth bothering with, who could possibly stop him?

The Dead Goddess Cult

Around a year before the Red Star's first appearance, a young Silent Strider calling himself Road Dust heard the Prophecy of Fire Walker for the first time upon completion of his Rite of Passage. For reasons known only to him, the Prophecy struck a special resonance with him. When the Red Star did appear, he took the omen even more seriously than most of the Garou Nation; he renamed himself Road Walker and began to preach a quiet, awful message to other Garou, one or two at a time.

Walker believes that his namesake's prophecy had come true: That Gaia is dead. He has assembled only one or two packs to his cause; less than ten Garou, to date, believe what he says. My sources tell me that Road Walker claims to have proof of some kind that Gaia is dead. For the time being, no Garou not of our tribe knows of Fire Walker's prophecy, much less the modern adherents to it, and surely if the other tribes did know they would consider such a thing to be criminally heretical. I don't imagine that Walker would live long, spouting such stories.

He and his people have no intention of remaining here in the world and fighting the Wyrm when the cause is lost. I have not spoken to any member of the small cult itself; I do not know the names of any of its members for certain. However, other Striders of my acquaintance have their own stories about the cult's plans. One story suggests that Walker's Striders intend to abandon the world, much as the Wagnerian camp of the Uktena plans to do — they will venture into the Deep Umbra and look for a new home. Another tale says that the group intends to venture into the Underworld to find Gaia there and remain with Her, protecting Her from the dark gods of Duat. A third rumor suggests that they wish to return Gaia to life. By what unholy means, I do not know. I suggest that you keep your distance from these Garou if you encounter them.

The Intifada

Overheard at the Wheel of Ptah, April 2002

We have always been the tribe of the dispossessed. Certainly the Uktena have stood by our sides in this. I would not deny that. The Uktena focus their lives on their Kinfolk in the Americas and sought Kin in other dispossessed cultures around the globe, while many of us focus on our Kinfolk in the Middle East. The Palestinians have rarely had a space that they legally governed. Most would say that they have never had a state that they legally governed for any reasonable length of time.

Since the British left their mandate in '48 the entire area has been unstable. I will grant that it has been unstable since before that, but I was not around when the Ottoman Empire collapsed or during the Crusades, so trace it back to 1948. I choose to blame the British and

the rest of Europe. They felt guilty for what had happened to the Jews of Eastern Europe, and rightly so. They assuaged their guilt by giving Palestine to the Jews without regard for the property or lives of Palestinians. We are the tribe of the dispossessed? The Israelis are no longer dispossessed. They are the possessors. The Silent Striders need no longer stand up for them and travel alongside them as the orphans of Europe.

Yes, that is correct, my father is Palestinian, as are most of my non-Garou relatives on both sides of the family. Not all of us traveled far from Egypt during the diaspora, and as you know my family's homes and the homes of the Kinfolk of my sept serve as way stations for traveling Garou of all tribes when they cross Palestine. Without regard to human politics.

I believe that as the cycle of violence continues between Israel and Palestine and innocent lives are lost on both sides, the Wyrm takes root. It festers in the hearts of all who take joy in this conflict and who pervert it for political gain. We must take decisive action — I do not say against Israel's army or government, but against the influence of the Wyrm. 'Combat the Wyrm wherever it dwells and wherever it breeds' is Gaia's law.

Also overheard at the Wheel of Ptah, April 2002

Jews have been screwed out of property and holdings in Europe and America over and over again through the centuries. Christians fought Muslims to take Jerusalem during the Crusades. Anyone ever ask the Jews? No, not really. No one gave a damn. Hey, after all, they ate babies, right? And they killed Christ! Oh, Gaia preserve us.

We knew the superstitions were false, we didn't give a Ratkin's ass who killed Christ, and we found ourselves traveling the same roads as some Jewish travelers in the years after the Fourth Crusade. Over the years to come our tribe came to regard the Jews just as they did the Rroma and half a dozen other groups: fellow travelers on hard roads, outsiders in every community. We didn't really interbreed with them so much as we did with some others — some real fundamental theological differences, you know — but the Striders have Kinfolk in a few Jewish communities.

So finally, after some horrible crimes against them, a number of Jewish settlers manage to claim and hold their homeland, fighting off plenty of strong foes and building themselves a secure and prosperous home. So suddenly the committed wanderers of the tribe want to abandon them? What is this, the Garou equivalent of abandoning a punk band because they got too popular? The Silent Striders have historical ties to the people of Israel. No other tribe has a strong presence there, and the Wyrm is always lurking. The Cult of Sutekh makes its home rather nearby! We have to remain there.

Yes, it is honestly a shame that the Palestinian people have lost so much territory and freedom, and the Striders owe them their support as well, but the insane tactics they have used for the last fifteen years are never going to drive the area toward peace. The violence only serves to feed the Wyrm, in the end. Stability will provide peace; peace will help us win the greater war.

The Caern of Long Voyages

A Garou named Jackson Longwalker, alpha of the Black Stalkers pack of Silent Striders, is a Galliard with an obsession about the long-lost Caern of Long Voyages. He's done as much research on it as he can — which isn't much, because almost all of the Garou who made up its sept were Silent Striders. As Strider ancestor-spirits, they cannot be found. Longwalker learned what he could from various spirits, and then about two years ago he and his pack disappeared.

We didn't pay his disappearance a lot of mind at first. We're Silent Striders: we go away sometimes. We usually come back. But strange stories started to crop up. Nature spirits said they'd seen him and his pack, that kind of thing. These stories almost always came from the West Coast of the United States, a lot of them from Seattle. But then a guy I go way back with who calls himself Horus (no, not the Horus from Alabama, or the one from Novgorod — the one from Washington State) swears up and down that he talked to a young Japanese shark-changer who'd seen Longwalker in Kumamoto. The shark-changer, Hayashi Kaokami, said that Longwalker had come in from the sea, but that he was very cagey about precisely where he'd come from or what he'd been up to out there.

You can probably guess what *I* think he's been up to, but I believe that I will keep my suspicions to myself, and simply hope that it's working.

The Howl and the Wall

I am going to try and present the following story without any commentary. I don't know what to make of it, but since I'm getting roughly the same story from two independent Garou I have to assume that something's going on.

I bumped into a young Garou, Sarah Owlschild, about six months ago in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was a little disturbed. Her pack is multitribal, pretty wide-ranging and fairly modern. They don't stick physically together as much as more traditional older packs do, they use the Internet with a fair amount of savvy. What she told me, more or less verbatim, was this:

"My younger sister's Kinfolk but doesn't really know it, she isn't part of the culture. Mom and Dad are suburban office worker types. Marie's fifteen now. She ended up pregnant last year, and couldn't bring herself to go through with it. I offered to take her to our people, maybe the local

sept could help her in some way, but she is still very suspicious of my 'freaky commune friends,' so I didn't push. I drove her to the Planned Parenthood clinic in Muskegon.

"I don't honestly know what possessed me to look at the spirit world in and around that place. It should have occurred to me that it might not be quite right. It... wasn't quite right. I don't have any ability to sniff out the Wyrm, but it didn't seem exactly Wyrm-tainted. The Gauntlet was *really* thick. Beyond that, there was a hollowness, a sense of loss, and something palpably semiconscious all around me. To be honest, it spooked me. After the procedure was over I kept meaning to go back, bring my packmates and everything, but I kept finding excuses not to.

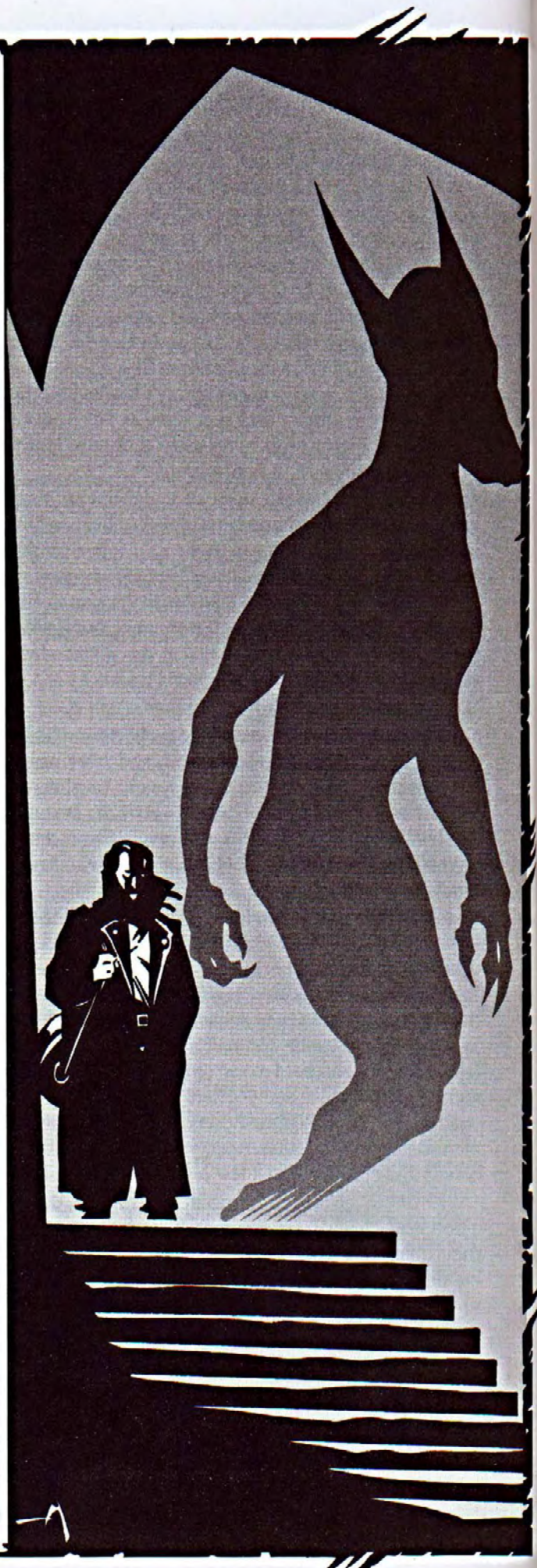
"Eventually our Theurge — Johnny Two-Moon, I think you met him – came with me to the site in the Umbra, and really looked around. John's been around forever, y'know, he's Adren now. He said he was almost certain that the eerie effect in the Umbra was just a reflection of the emotion and pain of the women who'd gone through abortions there. He was very confident that the babies — the fetuses — oh, I don't know what the hell to call them — didn't have souls of their own yet, that so early in their development they were just sharing Mom's soul, and so there couldn't have been a real death-echo there. And that the Gauntlet was so thick because of the repression of emotion in the area, and the mechanical nature of the procedure itself. I believed him, but thought you would want to hear about it."

I would have just filed this story away, except I was in Newark, New Jersey about a month later and heard about a late night brawl between two packs of Black Furies outside of a clinic there. I tracked down the Galliard of one of the packs, Helen Axewarden, and asked her what had happened. Again, as well as I can remember here is what she had to say:

Oh Boy

The material in this section, "The Howl and the Wall," covers a very sensitive subject in modern American life; abortion is a religious, moral, political, and personal issue. **Werewolf: the Apocalypse** does not have a particular stand regarding abortion in the real world; the material in this section shouldn't be taken as an endorsement of any particular position on the issue. **Werewolf** is a game of animistic horror, and in such a setting, an event that is as emotionally, physically, and spiritually charged as abortion will have an impact on the spiritual surroundings.

Storytellers and players should consult one another and the troupe at large before introducing storylines based on this material, and if anyone in the group feels uncomfortable at its addition, drop it and move on. It's a big World of Darkness; there are other stories you can work with.



"It started as a disagreement between our packs. My packmates and I are all Furies; so was the other pack. They believe that it is acceptable for human women to destroy the life within their wombs should the coming child be inconvenient for their careers or their men. We disagree. We had come to this city in part to destroy this symbol of the Namer's domination over the natural order. The other pack — Hecate's Grace — stood against us. They claimed to be defenders of women's' right to 'choose.'

"Although my packmates and I were and remain confident that we are in the right here, we did not expect the local spirit world to react as it did when the first blood was drawn. There was a ripple of some kind in the Umbra. Something reacted to our battle. My pack's totem spirit fled; I learned that Hecate's Grace's totem also fled. There was a scream. I believe it came through the wall of the Umbra, or possibly even out of the lands of the dead. The scream struck three of my sisters down; half of Hecate's Grace was similarly affected. The battle ended as my sisters and I tried to pull our tribemates from the area. We had no idea what was going on.

"We did manage to escape. Eventually my packmates recovered, and I am told that the other Garou of Hecate's Grace also recovered. None of us are certain what happened, but I believe that the reaction we experienced came from desperate child-souls that were trapped in or near the clinic after their bodies' destruction. I do not know why they would have responded this way to our presence. The Furies of Hecate's Grace told me that they had spent time near such clinics in the past and, even when things did get violent there was no such response."

So, thick and spooky Gauntlet? Semiconscious child-ghosts? I have no idea. The only guess I will venture is that things might have changed after the big storms in the Underworld a few years back. Lots of other things about ghosts did change after that; maybe it had an effect on this.

September 11th

Every American — and through American domination of world media, just about everyone in the modern world — knows what happened on the eleventh of September of '01. The crashes and collapses that came afterward had more of an impact on the Silent Striders than you might initially think, and for different reasons.

First, let's get the basics out of the way. While I am sure that the Wyrm and its minions cackled and gloried when the buildings fell down, the event wasn't the act of supernatural beings. It was humans, ordinary, boring, mundane, suicidally fanatical mortals, that crashed those planes. The crash wasn't done to satisfy any magical agenda that I know about, either. It obviously wasn't the completion of some kind of massive ritual — I say "obviously" because if it had been, surely there would have been some kind of result to the ritual by now, more than a year later. And I don't know of any Wyrm cults that had it in for the Towers or the Pentagon, though I'm sure there are all kinds of fruitcakes out there waving their Tarot cards around hollering about something or another.

I don't think there were any Striders in the buildings when they collapsed. I expect there were a handful of Kinfolk in the building, but I have not yet heard from any Garou that honestly claims to have lost family there. I would not be surprised if there were Garou in the buildings, but then again I wouldn't be surprised if there weren't. There aren't a lot of werewolf stockbrokers or investment bankers, after all. I hear rumors, but nothing substantiated. Like I said, definitely no Silent Striders. Not exactly our part of town.

The attacks have affected us in particular in a number of ways. First, a lot of Striders and Strider Kin are of Middle Eastern descent. It's really not easy for a random swarthy guy to travel around the US anymore. We have a hard time taking public transportation, and small-town cops like to show off their law and order credentials by pushing around the foreign-looking outsider. We do a lot of travel on foot, hitchhiking when we can, and let me tell you, I've gotten precisely *one* ride in the last year. This isn't too much of a problem for Striders who aren't of Middle Eastern descent, I admit, nor is it much of a problem outside of the United States.

Secondly we have the increased political and religious tensions in the Middle East. Whenever governments get nervous about the future, they clamp down on strangers, dissidents, and travel. Silent Striders can't help but be at least two of those, most of the time, and we're often all three, as few Garou are practicing Muslims and most of the governments of the Middle East descend from the Caliphate in some way. Many of our Kinfolk are devout Muslims, on the other hand, and in fact several of my tribemates tell me that they had Kinfolk fighting on both sides of the short war in Afghanistan. When things get tense there, as they are currently, we worry about the prospect of full-scale war and the devastation it is sure to bring to the few remaining caerns and Garou holy sites in the region.

Lastly, well, there's the Lower East Side itself. Don't go there. If you're hearing these stories, you know about our tribe's problems with ghosts. We attract them like lint to a balloon. Three thousand or more people died. I have only heard about one Strider who went to Ground Zero, a Ragabash, Carla Walks-Where-She-Likes. Ever pass a magnet through a pile of iron shavings? From what I heard, Carla survived, but she can't talk anymore; she doesn't even see you. She is... having other conversations these days. I don't know what the Umbra is like at Ground Zero, and to be honest I don't want to know. We'll let a stupid Ahroun from a warrior tribe find out and let us know.

Chapter Two: The Road is Life

Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk again;
we had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life.
— Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

People ask me why I keep these journals. Why I write everything from my travels down. We're an oral culture. Our history and customs are passed down by word of mouth. We don't read; we listen and — Gaia willing — learn something. I'm lucky. I've always been good at remembering the stuff I hear. Hell, it's what got me through high school without ever studying.

Vik Stryker died tonight. For ten years, I've had the honor of calling him my mentor, and more importantly, my friend. I've never had many friends. Growing up, I was an outsider. Most of us are. It's a side effect of what we are. And as much traveling as I've done since learning what I am, I've never really had the time to make close friends. So I tend to treasure those I have.

Vik is — was — the oldest living member of our tribe. Hell, since old Morningkill died, Vik was supposedly the oldest Garou in the world. The son of a bitch was over 100 years old, if you can believe it. As a rule, our people don't live to a ripe old age. It's uncommon for us to live past fifty or sixty, and maybe less than half a dozen each century somehow manage to live past ninety. Besides Vik, the only ones I know of in my lifetime have been King Jacob Morningkill, a Glass Walker named Wok Wok Rik, a Black Fury crone named Blood-of-the-Moon, some Bone Gnawer called The Sand Jackal and another Strider named Tommy Ringfinger. All but two of them are dead now, and Vik was the only one to pass the century mark.

Vik lived the last forty years without the Wolf. He never said anything about it, but I could always tell that it was a deep source of shame for him. And I'm glad that in the end, he found the Wolf again, and died the way he always wanted to. Fighting the good fight. As long as I knew him, he kept up the fight against the Wyrm. Even without the Wolf, his mind was sharper than most cubs a quarter his age. He'd forgotten more about our tribe, our history, our allies and our enemies than I've learned in my twenty-eight years.

And that's why I'm writing this down. Our tribe is cursed. Unlike the rest of the Garou, we have no contact with the spirits of our ancestors. For all the lore we've uncovered about the Underworld, what happens to us after death remains as much as mystery to us as it does to humans. When one of us dies, he is gone and all his knowledge and wisdom and strength are gone with him. When Vik Stryker died, he took a century of stories and secrets and strategies to the grave with him. The end times are upon us. If I die tomorrow,

I want to leave whatever knowledge and secrets I can behind for this generation. I want to leave whatever help I can to those who must fight the Apocalypse.

I can hear the others starting to howl. It's time for the Rite of the Winter Wolf. Time to say goodbye to one of our own. When the Rite is over, the other Striders and myself will finish the night as we always do when one of us falls. We will gather, apart from the others, and share whatever knowledge and wisdom we have. That way, when one of us dies, what we know will not die with us. And tonight, I will write down all that I know and learn in the hope that someone might someday learn from it.

The End of the Road...

The ornate funerary rituals of the pharaohs never caught on with us. Our ways are simpler. I helped the Master of the Rite prepare Vik's body. We cleaned his body and performed the Rite of Purification. Then we made offerings to Great Scarab. She sent her children to help prepare Vik for his journey to the afterlife. I watched as scarab-spirits stripped the dead flesh from his bones. When there was nothing left to devour, the spirits departed. We gathered his bones and buried them in the earth. A few small glyphs are the only markers. Some might think it's not much of a memorial to someone who meant so much to me. They'd be missing the point though. The grave is just a symbol. A reminder. Vik's real memorial is in my head and in my heart. In my memories.

...Is Only the Beginning

Now we gather. There's not even a dozen of us here. We're so spread out that it takes a while to gather a large number of us in one place. We will tell each other stories. Stories about Vik. Stories about where we've been and what we've done. Stories we've heard from others. I won't record what they say word for word. That would be to miss the point. It's not a message or a prophecy that must be repeated verbatim. The point of this is for each of us to take in all of the information, and to interpret it as best we can. The goal is for each of us to develop an understanding of our tribe as a whole. So what I write is my people as I understand them. The world as I see it.

The Curse

To even begin to understand our tribe, you must first understand our curse. Every tribe has something that makes them what they are. Something that sits at the tribe's heart with everything about the tribe flowing from it. For the Bone Gnawers, it's their desire to survive. For the Get, it's their love of strength. For us, it's our curse. For four thousand years, it has shaped what we do and why we do it. It is the cornerstone of what the Silent Striders are today.

Khem — Egypt — is our homeland, and we have been driven from it. No Silent Strider may know rest within the borders of the Kingdom of Egypt. No sleep. No peace. Even the love and comfort of Gaia is denied us as long as we dwell in Khem. And so we were forced to flee to the four winds. Alone among the tribes of the Garou, we have been driven from the lands of our birth. The Fianna still have their islands. The Silver Fangs still have their Rodina. Even the Uktena and Wendigo still have their Pure Lands. Gaia charged us to protect the lands of Khem. To watch over the Nile and keep it safe. And we failed. The Cult of Sutekh drove us out with the most blasphemous of Wyrm magic. Our trust has been left in the hands of beggars, merchants and addle-brained kings. Our birthright has become our failure and our shame. But it has also become our heart and our fury. Our pain becomes our Rage. We do not forget our homeland and we do not forgive those who drove us from it. We will have vengeance. We will go home again.

Our ancestors are lost to us. As I said before, when we die, all of our strength and wisdom goes with us. It's not just the ability to channel the power of our ancestors we've lost. We've lost *everything*. We can not summon ancestors to teach us Gaia's Gifts. Nor can we even reach our Tribal Homeland in the Umbra. All that which other Garou take for granted is denied us. Even the afterlife remains a mystery to us. Every Garou knows that if he's worthy, his spirit will pass into the Tribal Homelands upon his death, where he will be able to aid his descendants if called upon. Every Garou except us. We don't know what happens when we die. Perhaps we pass into the Tribal Homelands only to be forever cut off from the living. Perhaps we reincarnate. Or perhaps we pass into oblivion. No one knows. Death is a mystery to us. Here I am, someone who's spoken to countless ghosts and gods, who's been to a dozen heavens and twice as many hells, and when the man who's been like a father to me these past ten years lies dead, all I know about what's become of his spirit wouldn't fill a thimble. I might as well be a damn monkey.

That said, you might expect this to be a source of great angst for us. Lots of "woe is us" and "Gaia, why hast thou forsaken us?" accompanied by gnashing of teeth and rending of garments. A few of us do this, but before too long, another Strider will come along, smack you upside the head and tell you to get your act together. No, we do not angst over our lost ancestors. Our loss has become our quest. I said that death is a mystery to us, but that's only half true. Our deaths are a mystery to us, yes. But death itself is not. No other tribe knows more about the Dark Umbra and its secrets than we do. Tirelessly, we walk the earth and search the Umbrae, looking for the clues that will lead us back to our ancestors and for the tools to break our curse. We will never stop searching. When I die, I will be damned if I go before Owl and

Gaia and tell them I gave up the search. That I lost my nerve and decided it was someone else's job.

The spirits of the restless dead are drawn to us. The dead lead a sorry existence. Endless regret for the mistakes they made and the opportunities they missed out on in life. So when they find someone in the living world that can see them, they're the most obnoxious lot of whiners and beggars you'll ever meet. And they're persistent. Even if you help them with their problems, they keep hanging around wanting more. And word gets out that you helped one, a dozen more show up demanding your time as well. The only thing you can do is run. Ghosts won't drift too far from the people and places that are important to them, so if you run far enough, they stay behind and find someone else to bother. And now you know why we're a tribe of drifters and vagabonds. If we were simply cursed to never rest in the lands of Egypt, we'd all be camped out along the borders constantly making raids into Khem. No, instead, the ghosts of the dead hound us from place to place, keeping us constantly on the move. Our lifestyle is our burden.

So there you have it. We're a people with no homeland, with no connection to our past, and no place to rest. But we're also a people with a purpose, with a goal, and with a fucking job to do. We have no time to wallow in self-pity. Instead, the curse drives us ever forward, focused on the reckoning we will lay at the feet of Sutekh and of the Wyrm.

Children of Wolves (Lupus)

Once, wolves lived in Khem. Then the Cult of Sutekh killed them all. One more in a long list of sins we can lay at their feet. And one more failure on our part. Gaia will judge us for the latter; we will have retribution for the former. But there are still those of us born to wolves. Most of our wolf Kin live in North America and Central Asia. Ethiopia is home to our only remaining wolf Kin in Africa. They hover near extinction, but those of us in Africa guard them with our lives.

The life of a Silent Strider wolf isn't an easy one. Our curse may not fully take hold until Owl accepts us into his family, but a dark cloud hangs over us all our lives. Wolves can usually sense that something is off about a Garou even before he goes through the First Change. For us, it's even worse. Many of our wolf-born tribe mates tell of being regarded with suspicion and fear by their packmates. As if their Kin could see the grim specter of death hanging over them.

The restless dead who haunt wolf-born are sometimes the spirits of wolves and other animals. Wolves hunted down by humans come demanding vengeance. The spirits of deer and other game animals come asking for the proper

rites thanking them for their sacrifice so that they may move on and be reborn. Those human ghosts who are drawn to our lupus brethren typically fall into two categories: the desperate and the vengeful. The desperate are often those who died deep in the wilderness and will likely never find another human to aid them. The vengeful are often those who died at the teeth and claws of wolves or Garou — even at those of the Strider himself.

Children of Man (Homid)

Most of us are human-born these days. Every tribe in the Garou Nation is much the same, save the Red Talons. If we're lucky, both our parents are Kinfolk or we get adopted by Kinfolk in the know. Otherwise we have one Garou for an absentee parent. Just by being Garou, we become the proverbial problem child. Moody. Sullen. Withdrawn. And angry. If you're a homid and you're reading this then you know exactly what I'm talking about. The indescribable rage that simmers just under the surface. The urge to lash out at everything that bothers you. The burning need to fight. To kill. I pushed my parents to the breaking point. Others push beyond that, and end up either running away or getting thrown out. I think the only reason my parents never kicked me out was because they were diehard Deadheads who were convinced that trying to discipline me would "cage the brilliant butterfly that is my soul" or some such bullshit. I wonder what they'd think if they knew I killed a dozen people in a bar when I went through my First Change. Some butterfly.

We're a diverse bunch. It's a natural side effect of how much we get around. Of course, we're originally from Egypt and we still have Kin there, so some of us actually are still from the motherland. Those born in Khem have to get out though. Most move to the surrounding countries and journey back into Egypt as often as possible. Others travel all over the world, becoming devoted seekers of the answer to breaking the curse. After being driven out of Egypt, a lot of our ancestors sowed their oats around the rest of the Middle East and North Africa. Arab Striders tend to stay in the region, drifting from one corner to the other as necessary. There's always a few though who decide they're going to be the next Ibn Batuta and travel the world. Regardless, Striders from the Middle East tend to be among the most pure bred of the tribe, and some of them let it go to their heads.

Africa and India were the two other regions the ancient Striders tried to settle once the curse was laid. India was, from all I've ever heard, a mixed success. The tribes who were already there tend to be a cliquish lot, and follow some sort of complex caste system similar to that of their human Kin. We've never been really welcome into that system, so we exist on the fringes. No wonder so many of the Indian Striders decided to leave with the Rroma when they got driven out. Africa was a slightly better deal. Make no mistake, it's a dangerous place, but if you walk softly and carry a big stick, so to speak, you can get along okay. Most of our African Kin outside of North Africa live along the Nile River, in Eastern Africa.

As it became clear that the curse made it impossible for us to settle down in a single place, we started taking nomadic peoples as our Kin, and Striders are still born among them even if they've long since settled down. The oldest lines are found among the Bedouins of Arabia and the Tuaregs of Northern Africa. Dozens of our bloodlines are scattered throughout the horseclans of Central Asia. Our blood runs still runs strong in many Rroma families, even though many of them have given up their wandering ways. One still finds Striders being born on the lands of the Sioux and others from the nations of the Great Planes, from bloodlines going back to when we tried to live along side the native Garou.

Not all nomads are born into the culture. There's always been some of us who favor the open sea over the open road, and you know how sailors are when they get into port. The Wild West gave us vaqueros and cowboys. The 1950s gave us bikers and beatniks. The Sixties and Seventies, Gaia help us, gave us hippies and Deadheads. Regardless of my personal biases, each of these subcultures still exists in one form or another, and each continues to produce Kin and Garou. Although to my knowledge I'm the only Strider I've met to claim Deadheads for parents. Or maybe Vik was right and I'm just the only one dumb enough to admit it.

Speaking of bands, it's not just groupies that produce us. There's a long tradition of Strider Kin living among traveling circuses and carnivals. There're stories of medieval troubadours. The past few decades have produced more than a few packs that travel as bands, scraping together a living from town to town, gig to gig. I even met one Strider who works the indie circuit as a professional wrestler. What's scary is that's not even the weirdest thing I've seen in my life.

But no matter where we come from or whom we attempt to live among when we can, all of us are still cursed. Human ghosts tend to favor us, looking for revenge, to make amends or any of a hundred other things. Almost without fail, the first ghost one of us picks up is one of the people we kill during our First Change. It's the rare homid who can change without going berserk among a group of humans. Some of them might have deserved to die. Some of them were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Almost all of them had families, friends, responsibilities. You know, lives. Many of us avoid the place where we First Changed, hoping to avoid the ghosts we created. I know I haven't been back to Nashville in ten years. Someday, maybe, I'll go back. Someday. Maybe....

Children of Sin (Metis)

If the lot of our lupus is difficult and our homids stressful, that of our metis is downright hellish. By necessity, metis must be kept hidden away from the eyes of men. That means they're kept isolated within caerns or else locked away in some more isolated location. This may not seem like much. After all, its what every metis of every tribe must go through until their First Change. But those other metis don't have to contend with the curse.

They say the sins of the father are visited upon the son. For metis, that's a fact of life. Their parents may be subject to shame and guilt, but a metis becomes a living embodiment of their sin and bears the mark of that sin on his body. For us, that sin is compounded. The curse affects every metis offspring of Strider parentage, even if he doesn't become one of Owl's children. Oh, he doesn't have to worry about being barred from Khem or from his ancestors, but from the day of his birth the dead'll haunt him. Perhaps this is why we have so many metis among our tribe. Even if he isn't born to a Strider mother, he'll still carry his father's curse. And we're more likely to understand the unique torture the curse visits upon young metis.

Think about it. We move around to escape the spirits of the dead. Metis don't get that option. In the past, it was possible for dedicated Kinfolk or a devoted pack to carry the child with them, but in the modern world, that isn't feasible. Some of us in Africa and Central Asia can still get away with it, but everywhere else it's near impossible. So the metis child has to remain in one place, vulnerable to every ghost that can find him. If he grows up in a caern, he might be okay if the caern totem, the Master of the Rite or some Theurge decides to protect him from the restless dead. Others aren't so lucky.

Metis are haunted by the ghosts of animals and men, seeking the same things they do from Striders born to wolves or humans. On top of this, metis must contend with the spirits of those metis who don't get the chance to grow up and redeem their parents' sin by becoming one of Gaia's champions. Metis who were drowned, left to the elements or otherwise killed by Garou seeking to cover up their own sins. These ghosts do little more than torment their more fortunate cousins. Some of our metis go mad. Those who don't are often seen as strange and distant, even by our standards. Regardless of his mental health, a Strider metis is typically one of Gaia's most dedicated warriors. He is acutely aware of how his chance to redeem the sin of his birth is a chance others have been denied. And so he tries harder, perhaps hoping to earn redemption for those who can't.

Faces of the Moon (Auspices)

The rage we feel is no accident. Gaia made us to be a warrior race. We're Her Fangs. But Luna shapes what sort of warrior we become. It doesn't matter if we come from Algeria or Arizona, the phase of the moon we're born under dictates our path in life. Each auspice plays a critical role in the society of the Garou Nation and in the society of our tribe.

Ragabash

Ragabash are famous — which is a polite way of saying "stereotyped" — for having a sense of humor. Our No Moons' senses of humor tend to lean toward the morbid. The gallows humor typical of anyone who spends so much time dealing with death. You have to laugh at it sometimes, or else you go mad with grief. They're one of the main reasons our tribe has never fallen to despair and defeatism. If one of us mourns for what we've lost, the Ragabash asks what it is we still have, as well as how can we regain the things we've lost. They push us to examine our own weaknesses and to better ourselves.

In war, most of our No Moons become like vengeful wraiths. Silent and invisible, able to go anywhere and steal or kill anything. They also continuously question battle plans, probing for and eliminating the sort of weaknesses that could cost one or more Garou their lives. A few are a little more direct in combat. Well, direct for a No Moon anyway. They borrow tactics from jackals and hyenas, using endless hit and run attacks to slowly whittle their foes down. Some go so far as keeping opponents off balance with quips, barbs and a mocking laughter that would send chills up your spine if you heard it. Their taste for morbid humor carries over to their work as well. They teach serial killers what it's like to be stalked and hunted, or see to it that CEOs who dump waste into the ocean have "accidents" in their pools or bathtubs. That's our tribe's idea of comedy.

Theurge

Theurges are the shamans among an entire community of spirit-touched. Every one of us has a deep connection to the spirit world. But Theurges take that even further. Where the rest of us have a foot in each world, they lean more heavily to the spirit world. They see things no one else can see, and go where others fear to tread.

As Gaia's creations, we're naturally attuned to the Umbra and the spirits of life. As Owl's children, we're drawn to the Underworld and the spirits of death. Our Theurges seek mastery over life and death. Most have a haunted look in their eyes. Something that comes from being intimately familiar with what lies on the other side. They speak in riddles and cryptic statements because they

know, more than anyone else, that the dead are always around us. Always watching and always listening. And they know better than any that dead men can tell tales.

Philodox

Philodox are expected to serve as mediators, and we're no different. Because we travel so much, we're often outsiders to the numerous political disputes that crop up among caerns and septs. So a lot of times, they'll ask a newly arrived Strider Half Moon to serve as an arbitrator. The idea is that the Strider will make a judgment based on nothing more than the facts at hand. There's one small flaw in this idea, though. The facts at hand never exist in a vacuum. There's always a story behind each fact, so most of our Philodox tend to become pretty good detectives. Some septs get annoyed when some outsider starts poking around in their dirty laundry, but they keep asking us to arbitrate so they must not mind it too much.

The other job of the Philodox is to act as judge (and when need be, jury and executioner). Ghosts come to use wanting closure for whatever baggage they carried with them to the other side. For a lot of them, that means revenge on the people who killed them or who otherwise done them wrong. So who better to come to for vengeance than a 400 pound killing machine. Of course, ghosts are just like the living. Lots of them are liars, are exaggerating the wrongs done against them out of a need for petty revenge, or are otherwise full of shit. So most requests of that nature get forwarded to the nearest Philodox. The Half Moon will find out the truth. If the ghost has a legitimate grievance, the Strider will act on it. If not, well, we have ways of punishing the dead too.

Galliard

Vik once told me that the only thing the past is good for is enriching the present. If it can't teach you something, if it can't inspire you, then it's just so much excess baggage. That's what Galliards do. We teach and inspire. Both of those roles are absolutely vital to us as a tribe. Without our ancestors, we have no direct connection to our tribe's history. Our history exists only within the hearts and minds of the living. Without Galliards to make sure our history and culture passes on from one generation to the next, using stories and songs, our history will die out and be gone forever. For us, the Galliard's role is a most sacred trust. And it's one that our Galliards — myself included — take very seriously.

Our responsibility to inspire is equally sacred. For thousands of years, we've been barred from our homeland, cut off from our ancestors and hounded from place to place by the ghosts of the dead. We could have given up, fallen into Harano and faded into oblivion. But we haven't. We've kept going and we have no plans to quit any time soon. Our history inspires us to keep struggling. It doesn't matter if its the need for revenge against the Cult of Sutekh, the desire to live up to the standards set by those who came before us, or simple pride in who we are. We keep fighting, no matter how difficult the odds may be.

Ahroun

Most of Egypt's warrior traditions have been forgotten. The past few centuries have seen them cast as more of a nation of scholars and mystics. Other tribes sometimes foster the idea that the same holds true for us. The Get had their Vikings, so they must be fierce warriors. The Striders have their necromantic priests, so they must not be that good in a fight. More fools they. We were old when the human cultures of Khem were newborn. But unlike the other "warrior tribes," our Ahroun aren't braggarts. Oh, they make their claims for Glory and Honor just like any warrior. But it never becomes the focal point of their lives. No, our Ahroun are much more reserved. Maybe it's because they know first hand of the ghosts that war leaves in its wake.

Ahroun are meant to protect. Because we move around so much, it's hard for our Full Moons to protect caerns all the time. Instead, we favor a more proactive approach. Our Ahroun seek out threats before they attack, and destroy them then rather than later when they are at a caern doorstep. Sometimes ghosts will lead Ahroun to the monsters that killed them. Owl's spirits also lead us to the beasts that stalk the night. We know all too well of the creatures that lurk in the darkness, preying on humans who try to pretend such boogeymen no longer exist. Our Ahroun stalk silently through that darkness, hunting the hunters.

Rite of Passage

Long is the road and hard is the way that leads to becoming a Silent Strider. Because we're forced to move around so much, teaching our cubs can be fairly complicated. Actually, it can get to be a pain in the ass. Most of our cubs get their first taste of Garou society as part of another tribe's sept; I spent my first few weeks among a sept of Fianna in east Tennessee. That's where they learn the basics of what it's like to be Garou. How to control the Change, how to deal with spirits without making an ass of yourself and all that other fun stuff. Eventually, one of the Striders that the sept is familiar with returns from his wandering and takes up the new cub's education for as long as he can. If circumstances force him back on the road, he'll turn the cub over to another Strider if he can. If not, the cub gets his first taste of life on the road and joins his teacher on his travels. Either way, this is when the cub learns the specifics of life as a Strider. Our history, our curse, the basics about the Underworld, and what Owl expects of his children. After all that, the cub is ready for his Rite of Passage.

Our Rite of Passage is a three-part affair. The first is a trial of Will and Honor. The second of Gnosis and Wisdom. The final test is of Rage and Glory. The first trial involves delivering a message from one sept to another. This may sound simple, but it's not. The cub must memorize the message word for word. Remember, we preserve our culture orally and not with written words, so memory is vital. (Yes, by writing this stuff down, I am being a sick, degenerate cultural deviant.) Plus it's not like we can always write a message down. Most wolf-born are completely illiterate, and all but the most vague messages would threaten the Veil if they fell into the wrong hands. So the cub has to learn the message by heart, then he has to get it where it needs to go. An Owl spirit is summoned to serve as the cub's guide and Owl's brood is famous for picking the scenic route. The trek inevitably takes the cub through dangerous territory — war zones, cities, the Underworld — until he finally gets to the Sept the message is meant for. By completing the journey, the cub demonstrates that she has the Will to overcome the difficulties of her travels and the Honor to carry out the task which was entrusted to her.

The second trial requires to cub to deal with one of the Restless Dead. A ghost is summoned and the cub must help it deal with its unresolved business in the living world. This isn't as simple as it looks. As I've said before, ghosts are just like people. A lot of them are full of it and aren't above stretching the truth or outright lying just to get your sympathy. The cub's task is to figure out how sincere the ghost is, help it if it deserves it and drive it off if it doesn't. By dealing with the ghost, the cub shows that she has the ability to connect and deal with the ephemeral world and that she possesses the Wisdom to make intelligent choices.

The final test is trial by combat. The cub must hunt down and kill a creature of the Wyrm. Most of our cubs hunt vampires, but some go for fomori, Wyrm cultists or Banes. As long as the cub finds and kills her target, it doesn't really matter how she does it. Usually the cub stalks the monster until it's alone, then tears its head off. A few of our cubs — Ahroun especially — pass up stalking and just find the monster, rip its leg off and beat it and its four buddies to death with it. Whatever floats the kid's boat.

Name of Remembrance

Once a Strider has finished her Rite of Passage, they're one of the tribe. To symbolize the ending of their old life and the beginning of their new one, the Cliath takes a new name. Like the rest of the Garou, we have our "deed names." Stalks Death, Buries-the-Dead, and so forth. But we also take on a new common name as well. This name is called a Remembrance Name. It's always Egyptian — or a Greek translation of Egyptian — in nature. Something like Horus, Anubis, or Menu. Some of us adapt our Remembrance Name as our full-time name. Others of us use it only at moots. My Remembrance Name is Narmer, but I only use it for formal occasions. The reason for this Remembrance Name is to remind us of where we come from. It's a small thing, but it helps keep the spirit of Khem alive within our hearts and minds. It's a remembrance of what Gaia gave us, of what we lost, and of what we will have again.

There are a few names we never take though. One, of course is Sutekh or Set. This is a name to be forever cursed. No Strider will even speak that name without spitting afterwards. Likewise, we will never take the name of Ausare, or Osiris. Human magics may have redeemed him after his destruction, but we can never forget that he too was one of the undead. Gaia will weigh and judge his heart now, but we will not honor him. Although female Striders will take the name Eset, few will take her Greek name, Isis. The Cult of Isis was once an ally of sorts against the Cult of Sutekh, but they grew corrupt and debased, and ended their days as worthless puppets for the Wyrm and Sutekh. Better we remember them as the daughters of Eset who used magic and learning to protect the lands of Khem than as the sad mockery they became. The last names we don't take are those of Sebek and Bastet (whom the Greeks call Bast). They have their own children, and we honor them not by taking their names, but with the peace of the Ahadi this may change in time.

The Myth of the Lone Wolf

Every tribe has its stereotypes, and we're no different. Of course, most of these stereotypes are outsiders' misconceptions. The biggest misconception about us is that we're an entire tribe of lone wolves who travel alone and barely associate with others. What's funny is you never hear lupus saying this. Maybe it's because they instinctively know what a Glass Walker friend of mine once said: "A lone wolf is a dead wolf."

Humans and wolves are both social creatures. They crave companionship, and as men and wolves, Garou are no different. Yes, we go off on our own at times. So do members of every other tribe. You can't exactly go looking for a mate with other Garou in tow. Sure, maybe she's got four friends — of different genders, unless your pack is a guys-only club — who are also looking to get lucky... and maybe the Red Talons will start letting monkeys join their tribe. It's not just mating. Family. Personal business. Spiritual matters. On top of that, we get to add dealing with annoying ghosts and trips into the Dark Umbra, which most other Garou would just as soon avoid. But there's a difference between taking a week of "private time" and spending your entire life as an antisocial hermit.

Almost all of us are members of a pack. It's a survival instinct. Garou are more effective and dangerous in groups, so we're naturally inclined to stay in a

group. We're nomads, yes, so we join nomadic packs. Often, this means a pack made up entirely of Silent Striders. You see this a lot in Africa and Central Asia, where we tend to be among the majority. If we aren't in the majority, we just find Garou from other tribes who are also nomadic. This isn't that hard, really. There's always a nice collection of other Garou whose doings require them to travel. So we round up a few friends, find a totem and hit the road.

The only time Striders tend to be loners in the long term is when they get old. Elders have usually seen most of their pack mates die. So they tend to drift from sept to sept, enjoying the company of others as long as they can before having to move on. Sometimes though, these Elders form new packs, either with other Elders or with younger Garou who need the help. No wolf can remain alone forever.

The Myth of the Rootless Wanderer

The other misconception about us isn't so much of a misconception as it is a misunderstanding. Yes, we are nomads. No, that does not mean we aimlessly wander the four corners of the globe, wherever the winds may take us. When nomadic tribes wander, they follow a set pattern. From this oasis to that town. From this hunting ground to that trading post. The only difference between them and us is that we move as individual packs instead of as an entire tribe.

While most Garou have one sept and caern that serves as their home and territory, we have to operate on a larger scale. Rather than pick one small area as a protectorate, each of us works a circuit. This circuit is a sizable geographic area, usually with several caerns or septs within it. We travel the circuit, going from caern to caern, sept to sept in a semipermanent pattern. This enables us to carry news, warnings and other information between septs and to patrol the areas between caerns for dangers that might be too far away from the Caern's bawn for anyone to have noticed it yet.

Different Striders work different sized circuits. Some may wander only a few hundred miles in either direction. Others may wander entire continents. Master Patel of the Wheel of Ptah Sept never travels more than a day's run from Casablanca. Anubis Hillwalker works a circuit that takes him from West Virginia to Georgia and back again. I travel all over the United States east of the Mississippi River. Walks-With-Might, Gaia keep him, travels all of Africa. And then you have the rare ones like Mephi Faster-than-Death who actually do travel the entire world. But even Mephi tends to keep to a pattern of sorts, checking in with certain caerns at least once a year.

You may wonder why we do this. Why we adopt so much territory as our protectorate, and why we work to help defend so many caerns. That's an easy one, really. Gaia charged us to protect Khem. We failed. So now we work to aid the other tribes any way we can, in the hope that they'll never have to endure the same failure we have.

The Myth of the Gypsies

Sigh. And then there are those misconceptions that make me want to beat my head against a large rock until I'm unconscious. If a vampire died every time I heard some crack-induced story about the Rroma and our relations with them, we'd all be sleeping under the stars of Egypt's night sky tonight.

So here's the story, if for some reason you haven't heard it. When we left Egypt, we scattered to the four winds. Some of us tried settling in India, but it wasn't a huge success (not to say it was a failure, just that there are reasons why we aren't known as "the Indian tribe" these days). Over a thousand years ago, a bunch of soldiers and their camp followers had to leave India and move into Persia. A bunch of Indian Striders thought, "hey, these guys are probably going to be on the move for a while, so why don't we follow with them and use whoever we can for breeding stock." Such is the noble beginnings of our relationship with the Gypsies. And every time they moved, a bunch of Striders tagged along and tried to score. Tag n' Shag, so to speak. So today you have a number of our tribe born to Rroma Kinfolk. That's it. We didn't pick them because they were Gaia's most favored children or they have some sort of special insight into the universe born solely from them being Little Brown Brothers or whatever this week's' favorite friend of a friend story is. They were migrating and we decided to tag along. End of story.

Of course, since a bunch of us actually are born among the Rroma, a whole other mess of misconceptions comes up. At least half of them come from the dumb stereotypes monkeys have about Rroma. People watch too many bad movies or read too many crappy books and start thinking that gypsies are these care-free, happy go lucky scarf-wearing souls who dance and sing while stealing chickens and justifying it with the kind of lame-ass philosophy on the nature of property ownership that college freshmen think is really deep and revolutionary. It all comes from that "noble savage" bullshit that first caught on about a century or so ago.

Yeah, some Rroma'll steal from you. But they do it because they want your shit and since you aren't one of their people, they really don't give two tugs of a dead dog's cock what you think. Just like every other bunch of thieves out there. Some of them do fortune telling to, but it's entirely a show for the rubes. Always has been. Oh, sure, there are some Rroma who practice real magic, just like there are some among every other culture. But that's mostly spirit magic and the odd curse. That and a whole lot of parlor tricks. And no, we don't learn secret

Gypsy magics. Our powers and rites are gifts given to us by Gaia and the spirits. It's far superior to any human tricks and I'll be damned if I'm going to spit in the faces of the spirits by telling them I'd rather spend my time learning monkey magic than seeking out their wisdom.

But you want to know the biggest secret about us and the Rroma? We can't really live among them. You see, the Rroma have some deeply serious cultural taboos about physical and spiritual cleanliness. Part of that belief is that the spirits of the dead are inherently unclean, or *marimé*. Those who have been touched by the dead are *marimé* as well. When a Rroma-born Strider comes of age and undergoes the Rite of Passage, he becomes a ghost magnet. Eventually, someone among the community will notice he's haunted and he becomes persona non grata. Sometimes he can work his way back into another community for a little while, but eventually he'll be found out again. To make things ever tougher, the Rroma believe that sometimes angry ghosts will come back as creatures called *muló* — the living dead. I'm guessing what they usually think of as *muló* are vampires. But because *muló* can take the form of wolves, some Rroma believe we're *muló* as well. That's got to be a kick in the head for a Cliath. Become one of Gaia's chosen, and your family thinks you're a damn vampire. The fact that owls are considered an ill omen among the Rroma doesn't help matters either.

So there you have it, the truth about the Silent Striders and the Rroma. Of course, other tribes have Rroma Kin, too. But they never seem to get saddled with the lame stereotypes.

Oh, and if you ever see a Garou dressed like an extra from a Dracula movie, playing a violin and offering to read your palm, it's probably a Ragabash planning to make a fool of you.

Camps

Like every other tribe, we get folks who come together out of common interests and goals. We only have a few camps, though. They aren't organizations, with leaders and membership lists or anything. More like special brotherhoods that specialize in a single broad field. Striders in camps recognize each other as members, aid and support each other when possible, and sometimes keep their own unique secrets and lore. Most of them recruit new members from cubs and cliath. They find young folks whose interests are similar to theirs and convince them that doing this one thing is vitally important to the health and safety of the tribe.

Seekers

The Seekers are supposedly our oldest camp. In the days when we still watched over Egypt, they were the first to travel beyond the lands of Khem. The first Seekers would travel up and down the Nile, across the desert sands and into the Umbra, looking for anything interesting they could find. They'd dare the wastes of the frozen north, the jungles and savannas of the south, and even the alien lands of Cathay. When a Seeker returned to Khem, he brought back odd scraps of spirit lore and unusual fetishes, as well as news of what was happening in the lands of the other tribes and reports of where Wyrm beasts lurked. When we were driven from Egypt, the Seekers were invaluable in helping us find new places to hang our hats for the night.

Ever since then, the Seekers have continued their work, but with a new purpose. They endlessly quest for a way to break our curse. To regain contact with our ancestors. To enable us to once again return to the lands of Khem. In doing so, the Seekers go everywhere and investigate any avenue that might seem promising. As a result, they are some of the best informed, most clever and knowledgeable Striders, each being a treasure trove of lore on a wide variety of subjects. We have an old saying: If you want to learn about something, ask a Seeker. History, politics, religion, magic, the spirit world, you name it, a Seeker will either know about it or know who or where to point you at to learn it.

Homid and lupus Seekers almost always spend time learning how the other half lives, so to speak. Human-born learn how to survive in the wilderness as wolves and to depend on their instincts and senses as much as they do their hands and minds. Wolf-born take the time to grasp some of the nuances of monkey culture. How to speak different languages, how to pass in different cultures and how to use tools. Metis Seekers tend to focus their attentions on Garou culture and on the Umbra, learning the histories of other tribes and the secrets of countless spirits. All of them learn how to deal with the Restless Dead. To the Seekers, ghosts are a window to the past and a potential source of knowledge they aren't willing to pass up if possible.

Ragabash Seekers tend to look for secrets and lore in the strangest of places. They tempt death in the lairs of vampires, the hidden vaults of magicians and the darkest corners of the Umbra, stealing anything that isn't nailed down. Theurges often focus on the world of spirits, searching for new rites or Gifts and digging up fetishes which have been lost for ages. Philodox Seekers usually become historians and detectives. They memorize and attempt to apply the secrets of the past with the same dedication they study the Litany, working to understand the truth of events past and present and how those events tie together into a greater whole. Seekers of the Galliard persuasion view the lost lore of the past as a way to inspire us in the present. Every secret

uncovered, every fetish recovered, every Gift learned shows us that we can continue to fight, and maybe someday win. Full Moon Seekers usually specialize in finding better ways to kill things. Most are walking encyclopedias of Wyrm beasts and their weaknesses, as well as new and ancient combat strategies and weapons. Many also pull double duty, working as bodyguards and muscle for their fellow Seekers. Regardless of how they do it, the Seekers are the ones who work to keep our past alive, ensuring that it continues to enrich our present, and who work to find solutions to our greatest problems.

Harbingers

The Harbingers are our second oldest camp. They were, according to their own legends, once members of the Seekers. As members of that camp, they were most frequently the ones who would return with warnings of Wyrmsign and other threats. Also, where most Seekers focused on uncovering the secrets of the past and present, the future Harbingers focused on uncovering the secrets of the future. They sought out every prophecy and prediction, no matter how obscure and would pour over them hoping to divine when and where future threats would emerge. The Prophecy of the Phoenix, the legends of the Perfect Metis and the Eye of the Wyrm, and the visions of countless seers gave them a window into the dangers that awaited us.

Once we were driven from Khem, the Harbingers became their own camp, and continued their efforts to warn others of dangers before they could strike. At first, many among the other tribes dismissed them as doomsayers, believing that with our failure to protect our homelands, we had gone paranoid and now saw the Wyrm everywhere. After the first few tragedies, the other Garou finally started to listen to the Harbingers. Even today, many septs dread to see a Harbinger within their bawn, because they know that death inevitably follows in her wake. But glory follows with them also, because where there's the Wyrm, there's battle and where there's battle, there's the chance for victory and triumph.

Harbingers continuously seek out new prophecies and new interpretations of older ones. Each carries countless visions of the future in his mind, carefully memorized and preserved so that the Harbinger might recognize their signs when he finds them. Wolf-born Harbingers most often seek signs of the future out in the wilderness, and bring warnings to the Red Talons and others of the few remaining lupus-dominated septs. Human-born Harbingers seek signs among the human civilization, and seek a greater understanding of human forms of prophecy and fortune telling in order to seek new ways of interpreting old warnings. Metis Harbingers seek their signs in the Umbra, endlessly searching for clues and dangers among the realms and pathways of the spirit worlds. All, however, bring warnings to septs and caerns around the world, rousing them to combat outside threats and even, when necessary, to deal with the vipers that might dwell in their midst.

Few Ragabash Harbingers announce themselves as such. They prefer to rouse others to action subtly, relying on manipulating sept members into the being at the right place at the right time to defeat the threat. Theurges tend to focus on dangers of a spiritual nature, bringing warnings of powerful Banes, plagues of spiritual corruption and other threats that must be dealt with by more than brute force. Philodox Harbingers are the most dreaded, as they frequently bring warnings of internal corruption. More than one Wyrm (or even Weaver) corrupted Garou has been uncovered by the actions of a Harbinger Half Moon. Galliard Harbingers specialize in aiding those septs in danger of falling to despair. They arrive and remind the local Garou of the responsibilities Gaia has entrusted to them and of the ancestors they must honor through their deeds. Most aren't above shaming a wayward sept into action, saying they will confront the threat alone if they must. Ahroun Harbingers are wandering champions. They show up at caerns under siege or in danger of immediate attack, rally the local Garou and help them beat back the forces of darkness. All Harbingers are among our tribe's most renowned warriors. They go where others fear to tread and fight the most dangerous of foes. Those that live to an old age are some of the most frightening and lethal creatures you will ever meet.

Dispossessed

The Dispossessed first came into being shortly after our exile. It's inevitable that when a group is driven from the land they consider their home, they'll want to go back. Force them to exist without a home for long enough, and eventually any home looks good to them. Such is the lot of the Dispossessed. They've been searching endlessly for a place to be our tribe's home. They don't want to wander. If they can't go back to Egypt right now, they want another territory to serve as our homeland until the day when we actually can take Khem back from the Cult of Sutekh. It'd be easy to see the whole thing as a lost cause, and the Dispossessed as doomed fools who are too stubborn to know when to quit. But I admire them for their dedication, no matter how misguided it might be.

The trouble is, none of them can really agree on just where that new homeland should be. They've tried to establish new homelands several times over the past few thousand years. Attempts to settle among the Pure Lands and among the Bunyip's old holdings were both failures. The Second War of Rage put an end to the former, and the Uktena beat us out of the latter.

Until recently, the camp's energies have largely been devoted to three areas. One is India — the first place they

tried, and even though other Garou there look at us as outsiders, the Dispossessed keep trying to make a go of it. Central Asia was a much bigger success. The nomadic horse clans made for good Kin, and there were even wolves. More recently, a few have hit on the idea that the United States, the land of wide open spaces that opens its doors to the disenfranchised of the world, can be our new home.

But outside those areas, the rest of the Dispossessed seemed ready to give up. Some could see nothing but a history of failure. A few even went over the deep end, muttering about how when the Apocalypse came, Gaia would reward them for their perseverance and they'd show everyone, yes they would. But now that's changed.

With our new treaty with the African Fera, a number of Dispossessed has started calling for us to claim all of Africa as our protectorate. They've started migrating to Africa and offering whatever support they can to the native Striders and their Fera associates. Elsewhere, a number of European Striders have thrown in with the new Shadow Lord leader in the hopes that he will be able to help them retake Egypt. And finally, Buries-the-Dead has begun a crusade against the vampires of Egypt and the Middle East. Many Dispossessed believe they have a real shot at finally destroying the Cult of Sutekh and are eager to finally reclaim their true homeland.

Not many lupus among the Dispossessed. They don't understand this obsession monkeys have with one patch of land being different from any other. To them, Khem is important because Gaia entrusted it to us, so we should have it back. The few lupus among the camp tend to be from Central Asia; that's where they were born and that's where they want to stay. Not many metis Dispossessed, either. Having been forced to endure the worst parts of the curse without being able to run away from their ghosts, they usually aren't that eager to settle down in one place too quickly. No, most of the Dispossessed are human-born. They take a strong interest in the history and culture of whichever people they've decided to live among, adopting their struggles and hardships as their own.

Dispossessed Ragabash prefer to move unseen among the culture they've chosen to call theirs. They watch and learn, often working quietly in an effort to bring the human culture more in tune with Gaian ideals. The primary concern of Dispossessed Theurges is to get in tune with the local spirits. They study local religions and superstitions, and learn as much about the local spiritual hierarchy and Penumbral conditions as possible. Philodox focus on learning the laws and taboos of the culture, and try to maintain some measure of law and justice among the human communities. Galliards devote as much time to learning the culture's history, lore and culture as they to do that of the Garou, and work equally hard at keeping it alive in the face of hardship. Dispossessed Ahroun become defenders of their newly adopted Kinfolk, protecting them from Wyrm beasts and other threats.

I wish the Dispossessed the best. If any of their current efforts succeed, it will be a great boon to the rest of our tribe, and likely to the Garou Nation as a whole. And if they fail? Well, they've failed before, yet we survive and the struggle continues.

Wayfarers

Ah, yes. Them. Few people like the Wayfarers. I don't. Although I suspect my reasons are a bit different than most other people's. Ask most Garou and they'll tell you how the Wayfarers are a bunch of mercenary scum who have no loyalty to Gaia, put profit before responsibility, would sell their mothers for a carton of cigarettes, steal candy from babies, you know. Most of these people have never met a Wayfarer. Me, I've met several of them. And I hate them because most of them are the sort of smarmy, smug-looking son of a bitch I'd just as soon punch in the face as say hello to. But still, they have their uses.

The Wayfarers are mercenaries, yes. But they are loyal to Gaia, to the tribe and to the Garou Nation. What you have to understand is that their attitudes are just one more outgrowth of the curse and its effects on us. Because we have to move around so much, it means that we don't have much in the way of a support structure. We don't enjoy the resources that come from holding numerous caerns and large flocks of Kinfolk or being able to set down roots in a place. So at some point in the last thousand years or so — no one knows when it all started — a few Striders decided, "hey, you guys have got all this great stuff and we don't, but we can go places and do things you can't so let's do business." So began the Wayfarers.

A lot of Garou claim that the Wayfarers work for money. A lot of these Garou haven't learned to stop thinking like monkeys. Sure, money is a useful tool when you move among humans. But it doesn't do you jack shit out in the woods, at a moot or in the Umbra. Yes, Wayfarers do jobs for money. They also do them for political favors at moots, for the right to stay at a caern, for instruction in Gifts and rites, for talens and sometimes even fetishes, and for any of the other forms of chiminage that serve as currency among our people. Every Wayfarer is a skilled negotiator who rarely, if ever, gets screwed over by a potential employer.

Homid Wayfarers are the most likely to work for money, but they accept other forms of chiminage for payment as well. Metis most often take assignments in exchange for political favors and the right to visit caerns. Lupus Wayfarers prefer non-material chiminage, such a Gifts and rites. No matter what form of chiminage a Wayfarer takes, once she accepts a job, she'll do every-

thing in her power to complete it or else die trying. A Wayfarer who can't complete a task isn't worth her price.

Ragabash Wayfarers are usually hired as thieves, spies and assassins. Their talents at stealth and subterfuge make them natural troubleshooters. Theurges typically hire themselves out as spiritual specialists and consultants. They deal with troublesome spirits, locate items lost in the Umbra and summon up ghosts who possess information the client wants. Philodox Wayfarers work as investigators for hire. If you need something checked out or someone found, he's your man. Galliards conform the most to the camp's stereotype, working as messengers and bonded couriers. A lot of them also work as jacks of all trade or as mind fuckers who convince people to change their allegiances, manipulate them into doing something the client wants or just driving someone off the deep end. Ahroun act as hired muscle. If you need a bodyguard, a legbreaker or just someone who'll rip someone's head off and use it as a soccer ball, look no further.

No matter what others think of them, the Wayfarers play an important part in our tribe. They're the ones who excel at getting support from other tribes at moots, collecting favors and learning about everyone else's dirty laundry. They may be bastards, but they're our bastards.

Swords of Night

Our tribe's hatred for the undead is legendary. But for some of us, that hatred becomes the very focus of their existence. Those Striders are the ones who become the Swords of Night. The Swords of Night started back in the days of Egypt. They were the leaders in our war against the Cult of Sutekh. Back then, they called themselves the Daggers of Nut, after the name the Egyptians gave to the Incarna of the Night Sky. Even after we were driven from Khem, they kept up the fight. For centuries, they would wander the world, killing vampires everywhere they went. And any time they entered a region, war between the Garou and the undead was sure to follow. Now, you may wonder, "what's wrong with that?" Well, apparently the other tribes got annoyed at being forced to actually deal with the Leeches in their midst. So finally the other tribes forced our Elders to make the Daggers of Nut disband. And that was the last anyone saw of them.

Until now. Over the past decade, there's been a noticeable rise in the amount of vampire activity out there. The Harbingers even started warning us that if we didn't do something soon, it might be too late. So the Elders of our tribe decided it was time to do start waging war against the undead again. And just as this was decided, Striders who had secretly been relentlessly hunting the undead all their lives started crawling out of the woodwork. Turns out that the Daggers of Nut never disbanded. They just went underground and became a secret society. Now they're back out in the open. They call themselves the Swords of Night, and they want to kill every Leech they can find.

Breed matters little among them; all hate the undead equally. Ragabash stalk vampires through cities, slowly but surely tearing down the beasts' sources of power, influence and food. Theurges gather allies from both the spirit world and from among the ghosts of those who died under the Leeches' fangs. Philodox cut through the endless webs of lies and networks spun by the undead. Galliards find allies among other tribes and rouse armies of Garou to do battle against entire cities of vampires. Ahroun face the Cult of Sutekh's champions in battle, carving their scaled, dead flesh to ribbons with klaives and tearing their corpses limb from limb with fang and claw. They even train their Kinfolk to help them, teaching them how to be spies, assassins and hunters.

Secret Societies

The secret societies really piss me off. Everything about them goes against the entire reason for me writing this journal. These guys don't tell anyone anything. They don't even admit to their existence. What I know about these groups are nothing more than rumors and half-informed guesswork. Take it with a grain of salt.

Eaters of the Dead

Starting with the worst of the lot. Every tribe has their embarrassments. Some are worse than others. I think the Bone Gnawers, with their inbred cannibals, are the only ones who come close to having as bad a group of black sheep as we do. Supposedly, the Eaters of the Dead were once members of the Seekers. At some point, a Seeker figured out a trick where you could eat the brain of a corpse and learn everything the guy knew when he was alive. At first, it sounded like a great thing. Really creepy, but useful. Now we didn't have to lose what our elders knew when they died. But gradually other Seekers figured out that the rite used carried the taint of the Wyrm with it. Those who used it started to slowly go insane and start reeking of the Wyrm's stench. Some even developed an addiction to fresh brains, becoming perfectly willing to kill any human they could to get them. The rite was already controversial, with many Philodox and even Ragabash questioning whether or not it violated the Litany. Now that the people who used it kept looking at smart people like they were a freshly killed deer, the tribal elders agreed that the rite was tainted by the Wyrm and should no longer be performed, ever.

Unfortunately, some folks were too far gone to stop. Worse, they weren't too far gone that they couldn't fake being normal. So the group went underground and has existed as a secret cult ever since. What they've been doing, other than eating people's heads, isn't well known. But I will say this. Every so often,

when one of our elders dies, another Strider gets caught messing with the corpse before we can summon Scarab's brood. When that happens, everyone knows that the Eaters of the Dead are still out there. After Vik died, I never left his body's side until after the scarabs were done with it. I will not let my mentor's body be desecrated by some Wyrm-tainted freak. I will not let his memory be sullied by some bastard who couldn't be bothered to learn his wisdom while he was still alive.

The Truth: Eaters of the Dead

The legends of the Eaters of the Dead are true. The Rite of Dormant Wisdom, forbidden to the rest of the tribe (and by extension to all other Garou) is tainted by the Wyrm. Once he performs the rite more times than his permanent Gnosis score, the Strider become a servant of Foebok, the Urge Wyrm of Fear. Recently, the Eaters of the Dead have discovered a variant rite which allows them to regain temporary Gnosis by eating the brains of supernatural creatures or of especially strong-willed humans (characters with a Willpower of 7 or higher), and the majority of the cult has used this knowledge to secretly return to Egypt. Although their plans were to take advantage of this temporary method of circumventing part of the curse and search Egypt for a more permanent solution, they rapidly degenerated into little more than a fanatical murder cult. Their presence in Egypt has yet to be discovered (save by the Bone Gnawer Maneaters they have allied with), but it's only a matter of time before their activities are uncovered. When the other Egyptian Garou discover the monsters that dwell in their midst, a bloody civil war will be inevitable.

For more on the Eaters of the Dead and their activities in Egypt, see **Rage Across Egypt**.

The Bitter Hex

Where the Eaters of the Dead are repulsive, the members of the Bitter Hex are downright scary. All I know about them is that they terrorize and kill people. Humans, wizards, vampires, even other Garou. Why isn't very clear. I've only heard of one reported case where they killed another Garou, and that was some Black Fury who had apparently gone mad and taken to torturing young boys to death. Most of their victims seem to be people who have left more than a few corpses in their wake.

When the Bitter Hex doesn't kill, they curse. You can usually spot a Bitter Hex curse because it's painful and it's poetic. Liars are struck dumb. Brutal thugs find themselves left as weak as newborn cubs. Killers are hounded by the ghosts of their victims. At least this is what I've heard. It's mostly second or even third-hand information. I'm almost afraid what might happen to me if I got too close to the truth.

The Truth: The Bitter Hex

In a tribe that endlessly deals with ghosts, it's inevitable that some will devote themselves to avenging the dead. The Bitter Hex traces its origins back to the days of ancient Egypt. There, they existed as a small sect devoted to the service of Am-mat, the spirit who embodied Gaia's righteous vengeance and the ultimate punishment that awaited the guilty in the afterlife. Once they were driven from Egypt, these Striders learned that such punishments were not guaranteed to the dead of other lands. So they set about rectifying matters. Today, the members of The Bitter Hex devote their lives to avenging the dead and punishing the guilty, all in the hopes that by doing so they might help restore some semblance of balance to the universe.

No one asks to join The Bitter Hex. If a member of the sect believes another Strider has the potential to be a member of The Bitter Hex, he observes the potential recruit for at least one year. After that time, the candidate, if suitable, is approached and the two Striders will travel together for a short time, allowing the recruiter to confirm his initial opinions. If he still believes the candidate possesses the proper mix of righteous fury and the desire to see justice done at all costs, he invites her to join the sect. Initiation into the sect is fairly simple. The candidate and her sponsor journey to the Atrocity Realm. Here the candidate must witness the endless acts of brutality until whatever sense of Gaia's love and mercy she possesses is completely exhausted (until she is out of temporary Gnosis). When only anger and Rage remain, she is thrust into one of the Realm's countless psychodramas where she becomes the victim. The laws of the Realm prevent her from being able to fight back, showing her what it's like to be a helpless victim. Upon her "death", she is ejected from the Realm and is asked if she wishes for the opportunity to avenge those who can no longer avenge themselves. If she accepts, the pair will begin her first hunt, seeking out one whom she believes is deserving of punishment.

The majority of The Bitter Hex's small membership is comprised of homids. They seek out the spirits of the vengeful dead and offer them the chance for closure. The targets of their wrath are most frequently those who are above human law. Vampires, wizards, Fair Folk and servants of the Wyrm are their most common targets, but some go so far as to punish Garou who have murdered innocents. Those who are not homids are most often metis. While they will also punish those who have wronged humans, they are known to seek out those Garou who have sired metis and then killed their offspring to hide their sin. The few lupus among The Bitter Hex punish those who transgress against Gaia and nature. The only thing that differentiates them from most Red Talons is the knowledge that their fellow sect members will punish them if they kill innocent humans.

Ragabash favor slowly destroying their targets' lives, letting them feel the same sense of helplessness that their victims once felt. Theurges are the sect's most accomplished curse-masters, skilled in numerous Gifts and rites that allow them to visit punishment upon any they feel are deserving. Philodox epitomize their auspice's role as judge, investigating atrocities and carrying out "appropriate" punishment. Galliards often prefer to haunt their targets, endlessly reminding them of the blood on their hands before delivering final justice. Ahroun favor a straightforward and often brutal approach.

Family and Kin

Then there's our Kin. They come from the same ethnic groups and subcultures we do. Arabs, Africans, and Rroma. Bikers, beatniks and cowboys. Wolves from Ethiopia, Asia and North America. Unlike us, our Kin don't have to keep moving unless they want to. And even then, those that are born into traditional nomadic cultures like Bedouins still have their entire cultural support structure. The kind of status in the community we can never really develop. Even if one of us tries to hang out in human society, we're still apart from it. Our Kinfolk give us a support structure. A place to stay for the night, a warm meal or even money. A lot of us are worse than Bone Gnawers when it comes to mooching off of relatives. Our Kin in the know about what they are usually leave little symbols around their property. Close approximations to the glyph for sanctuary, painted on walls, embroidered on tents or carved into wood or stone. It lets us know that we can crash there for a few days. Most of us get to know the Kinfolk living along the circuits we travel. It's the most common way we meet our mates. Our relationships are sort of evenly split between monogamous pairings and casual sex.

Our Kin, thank Gaia, aren't affected by our curse. At least not the way we are. We pick up ghosts by crossing in and out of the Umbra. Kin don't go into the Umbra, so they don't get a chance to pick up hitchhikers. However, a lot of them have the Sight. Maybe it's a side effect of the curse. Maybe its Owl's blessing. Or maybe it's just the result of hanging around us too much. But a lot of them are open to the spirit world. A few become shamans, or whatever their culture's equivalent to that role is. Most end up as spirit mediums. People who can see and communicate with the dead. And I mean who can really do it, not those fuckwit con artists on TV. A few of them make their livings as actual parapsychologists and psychic investigators. Most either try to ignore it or deal with the dead only as a side

hobby. It's another thing that makes them helpful to us. Most of the ghosts we pick up want something, and having another person around who's also experienced in dealing with the dead can be a major boon.

The World We Live In

So now you know about us. But that still leaves the world around us. No one lives in a vacuum. What we do impacts the things around us and those things in turn impact us. An endless circle of cause and effect, action and reaction.

The World of Spirit

We're creatures of spirit as well as flesh, and the spirit world is a vital part of our existence. Much of how we view the spirit world is drawn from the same primordial truths that the other tribes and even the Fera understand. But like everyone else, the countless centuries have seen us filter those truths through the cultural lenses of the people we call Kin. Mostly this is the result of homid Garou bringing their pre-Change preconceptions with them and influencing the tribe's beliefs. We're no different.

Our lens of choice is Egypt. Its ancient culture influenced us and continues to influence us even now. Now, of course the Egyptians got a lot of thing wrong. The monkeys always do. Their beliefs are just incomplete understandings or misinterpretations of the spiritual truths we know to be facts. What we know as spirits and Incarnae, they take to be gods. What we know to be rites and rituals for dealing with those spirits, they take to be magic. Humans don't have the same connection to the spirit world we do, so their understanding of their world and their universe will always be incomplete. I think this is the real reason why so many of them lose their sense of spirituality. There's no evil plot at work. They just get tired of constantly searching for something they aren't sure exists. If they had it and lost it, they start to convince themselves that they just imagined they had it in the first place. But we don't have that problem. We don't just know something more than the material world exists. We live in it. Every day.

Ma'at and The Triat

One of the terms we borrowed from the Egyptians is Ma'at. Ma'at is a concept, meaning the natural and harmonious order of the universe. When you have Ma'at, everything works the way it's supposed to and everyone is happy. To us, Ma'at is the universe the way it was when Gaia created it, and the status to which we hope to return the world. The basic cornerstone of Ma'at is the Triat. When the Triat works the way it should, you have Ma'at. Cosmic harmony. But if the Triat is out of whack, then Ma'at is lost, and things get fucked up. And the Triat's been out of whack for a long damn time.

Ptah was the ancient Egyptian god of creativity and art. To us, he is a symbol of the Wyld as it should be, a force of creation, inspiration and change. New ideas. New life. New energy. Without these new things to replace the old, the dying and the worn out, the world eventually becomes a wasteland and a void. But when Ma'at was lost, the Wyld became a force of unrestrained Chaos. Creativity and inspiration tainted by madness. The Wyld does as much harm as good. When — if — Ma'at can be restored, the Wyld will once again become like Ptah. The abstraction of pure thought, unbound by the limits of matter, providing the creativity and inspiration that can be woven into new and dynamic objects and ideas.

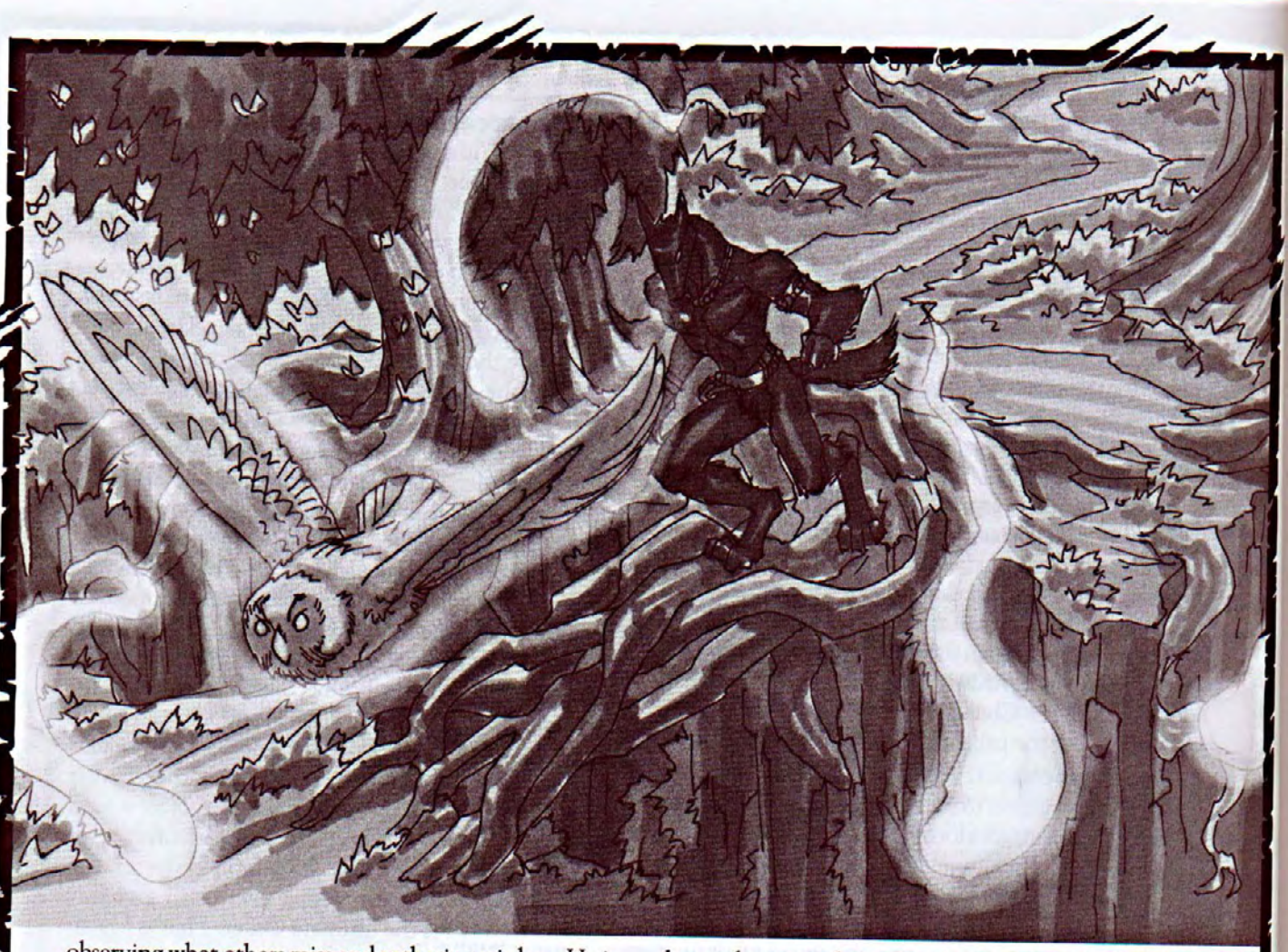
Djehuty — or Thoth as the Greeks called him — was the Egyptian god of science and mathematics. He is our symbol of the Weaver. Math and science are ways of looking at the world. They give order and structure to things. Under Ma'at, the Weaver provides order and structure to the universe. The primordial stew of ideas and creative energies are given direction and focus, making the theoretical possible. But without Ma'at, the Weaver has become a force of Stasis. Dogma locks things into a single form and ruthlessly stamps out anything that might question or threaten the status quo. If we can bring Ma'at back, the Weaver will become Djehuty again. Order and structure which understands that the short-term impermanence of such things allows for the long-term order of the universe. That which exists must eventually give way to the new. That is the ultimate Order. That is Ma'at.

Apep — also known as Apophis, again thanks to the Greeks — was the primordial serpent of Egyptian myth, who wished to return the universe to the primordial chaos that existed at the dawn of time. This is our vision of the Wyrm. The serpent who tears down the old, returning it to the primal energy from which it came. When Ma'at was lost, the Wyrm went mad. What was once a force of balance, clearing away the old to make way for the new, became of force of corruption. Rather than clear away things to make room for future growth, the Wyrm poisons and warps all it touches. Acts of creativity are twisted into nightmarish mockeries. Ordered structures are perverted, changing their purpose for the worse. Ma'at must be restored, so that the Wyrm can once again take its place in the natural order, acting as a force for change instead of mindless destruction.

If we can return the Triat to harmony, the universe will once again be the way Gaia intended it. It will once again have Ma'at.

Owl and his Brood

Great Owl is our father, just as Gaia is our mother. He is our patron and our guide. In return, we honor and serve him, seeking hidden wisdom in the dark and hidden corners of both the material world and the Umbra. Owl is not a braggart or a protector. He watches, quietly



observing what others miss and gathering wisdom. He is an example to all of us, teaching us how to learn more by listening instead of talking. Teaching us how to pay attention to what goes on around us. Owl also teaches us the secrets of the Dark Umbra, of the Underworld where only Owl dares to fly. And Owl is the silent hunter in the darkness. It's from him we learn how to stalk and kill our enemies without them ever learning we're there.

As our legend goes, Owl became our tribe's patron when the first Garou dared to journey into the Dark Umbra. Owl agreed to serve as the Garou's guide, showing him the secret pathways deep into the Underworld and then leading him back out again. Even after the harrowing journey, this Garou — the first Strider — would seek out Owl for his wisdom and for his company. Later, that Garou's children and cubs would also learn from Owl's wisdom and follow him into the Underworld. Their children, and their children's children, would do the same. Eventually, Owl adopted them all as his children, and they became a tribe. Us.

Owl continues to gift us with his wisdom. As I've said a dozen times by now, we can't contact our ancestor-spirits. Other Garou can and not only can they channel their wisdom and power, they can also learn Gifts from them. We can learn those Gifts from the ancestor-spirits of other tribes, but they always demand greater chiminage from us than they do from members of their own tribes. Luckily, Owl also teaches these same Gifts to members of his own brood, and they will teach them to us. We may not be able to learn from our own ancestors, but thanks to Great Owl, we can learn some of their wisdom from owl-spirits.

The Spirits of Khem

Although we've been driven from Egypt, we made a lot of allies in the ancient days, and many of them still aid us. Sphinx, of course, has long been a friend to our tribe. He honors us with his wisdom and his riddles, teaching us new ways to solve our problems. Falcon has also long been known to us. In Egypt, he became the symbol of Horus, son of Osiris and was a bitter enemy of Sutekh. Falcon continues to aid us in our war against the undead. Scarab embodies nobility and immortality, and her greatest gift is patience and tenacity. Crocodile was the great and terrible guardian of the Nile. He gifts us with his strength and with his patience, and has helped bring renewed peace between us and his most favored children. Ibis was the sacred bird of Djehuty and symbolizes the Weaver as it was and can be once again when Ma'at is restored. He grants us his knowledge and his great memory. Cobra is a powerful and deadly spirit in service of Gaia and a symbol the ancient lands of Khem. Cobra is angry at how her

image and her children have been corrupted by the Cult of Sutekh and aids us so that she may have vengeance.

Spirits of Exile

In the centuries since the curse was laid, we've found new allies as well. Spirits who understand the idea of a people forced to wander endlessly. Meros is the Planetary Incarna of Pluto. He's known as The Wanderer, and as The Homeless One. Meros understands the ways of the nomad and he watches over us, helping us reach whichever destination we seek. The spirits of the Four Winds are well known to us as well, since we've been scattered to them for so long. Those of us who have taken to the ways of the sailor have found friends in spirits such as Shark and The Flying Dutchman. During the days of the Wild West, we made friends with the spirits of the Great Plains, and even today, Bison, Twister and Thunderbird are great and powerful allies.

And then there's the American Dream. America is the land of the immigrant. Where those forced to flee other lands are given a new home and allowed to make a fresh start. At least that's the mythic ideal. But in the world of spirits, that mythic ideal has real power. Most American Dispossessed follow The American Dream. It gives them hope that America can be our homeland as well. The Bone Gnawers follow the spirit too, but their idea of the American Dream is different than ours. You see, to them, it's a dream of freedom and equality and of the immigrant who came here with nothing but the clothes on his back making a success for both him and his children. To us, the American Dream is a dream of freedom and wide-open space and endless roads to travel. It's the America of the cowboy and the wandering bluesman. It's the land of Tom Joad and Jack Kerouac. Where anyone can come and walk, ride or fly from one end of the continent to the other and no one can tell him he can't. That's our American Dream.

Rat Bastards

One other spirit that's important to us, but in a different way, is Rat. You see, Rat doesn't like us that much. Or, more to the point, Rat doesn't like Owl that much. Part of it's that rats and owls are natural enemies. Rat also doesn't like the fact that the spirits of mice and rodents that owls eat become part of Owl's brood instead of hers. Garou who follow Rat aren't allowed to hurt Rat's children either, so a lot of them take offense as us leaving mice and other snacks out for Owl's children. So we throw down on each other once in a while. Nothing serious. More like bar brawls than wars. Folks end up with some cuts and bites or the occasional stab wound. Maybe some broken ribs. Like I said, nothing serious. It's the way things should be, really. Owl's role is to hunt rodents. Rat's role is to fight like a total bastard against anything that lays its hands on him. That's Ma'at. But no matter how much they don't like each other, both are loyal to Gaia and will close ranks against outside threats. The same with those of us who follow the two spirits. Me against my brother, me and my brother against our cousin, and our whole family against everyone else.

In the Umbra

The Umbra is as much our home as any place in the material world. We follow Luna's paths through the spirit world just as we would a dirt road or a deer trail through the wilderness. There are few Realms Striders haven't been to. But some are more important to us that others.

We deal with death a lot. Ghosts bother us constantly and Owl encourages us to seek wisdom in the darkness that others may fear. The Atrocity Realm is a place of death at its worst. We get to see how the helpless are butchered and slowly ground down into nothing. These are the kinds of ugly deaths that produce more than their fair share of restless dead. We do well to understand the Atrocity Realm, as it gives us greater understanding of the spirits that are part of our twisted birthright.

More important than that slaughterhouse, though, are the Tribal Homelands. Where the spirits of Garou heroes go when they die. Unfortunately—and as I've said over and over — we're cut off from our ancestors. That includes our Tribal Homeland. Oh, it's out there somewhere, lost in the Umbra. But we can't get to it. Not without a hell of a lot of effort. A few Striders have had the honor of finding the place. If rumor is to be believed, those who actually find our Homeland also find a way around part of the curse and are once again able to call upon the power of our ancestors. I don't know if it's true. If it is, I haven't met anyone who can do it.

Oh, one other place that's important to us. The Aetherial Realms. Now, you might ask, what interest would the Silent Striders have in the realm of the sky and stars. Well, how do travelers, nomads and wanderers find their way around? They follow the stars. We aren't as obsessive about it as the Stargazers, but we have our fair share of sky watchers and astronomers too. On top of that, we've never really shied away from things like astrology and trying to find omens in the night sky. So a lot of us travel to the Aetherial Realms in search of the same lore and wisdom we seek everywhere else.

Down In the Deadlands

And then there's the Dark Umbra. As Garou, we're creatures of life. We're alive in ways that humans or even wolves can never begin to understand. Every fiber of our being is bursting with Gaia's power. With Her love and Her rage. This is why so few Garou dare the Dark Umbra. It's a place of death, not life. That may sound trite and simple, but it means a lot. The Underworld is a place utterly devoid of

life. It's an alien environment, far more unsettling than you might think. Sure, there are countless realms in the Living Umbra or even the Deep Umbra where your senses can be twisted six ways to Sunday and back again. But those realms are still alive, even if only in a way we can't wrap our minds around. The strangeness of those realms is on an intellectual level. They seem strange because the laws the Weaver has created that we're so used to begin to break down, confusing the Weaver oriented parts of our brains.

But the Dark Umbra is different. It's wrong to us, but not because it confuses our Weaver part. No, the Dark Umbra has its rules and laws and they remain largely the same throughout. As I said, the Dark Umbra is dead. We're creatures of life and as such we're tuned into the hum and pulse of the life that's around us. The animals and birds. The plants and insects. Even the winds and the earth beneath our feet. Hell, even the Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers are tuned into the twisted heartbeat of the cities. But when you enter the Dark Umbra, that pulse dims. It becomes muted. Distant. The deeper into the Dark Umbra you go, the less and less you feel it. Until finally you realize it's gone. No scents or sounds carried on the wind. No vibrations under your feet. No life. This is why the other Garou fear the Dark Umbra, and why they feel uneasy about our seeking wisdom in those dark, dead lands.

The Dark Umbra is a dangerous place. The restless dead that haunt the living — and us — are just the tip of the iceberg. Ghosts are like cockroaches. For every one you see, there's at least a dozen more you don't. That many ghosts don't get together without someone trying to be in charge. So you get entire kingdoms of dead people. Kingdoms with armies. Don't think just because you're some big bad Garou you can walk in and start throwing your weight around. They'll dog pile your ass and beat you down. Luckily that's not our way. Like Owl, we walk quietly, watching and learning. The best strategy in the Dark Umbra is to never let them know you're there.

That's especially true these days. Every so often, when something really bad happens, the Dark Umbra erupts. Maybe its just so attuned to death that when the bloodshed here in the material world gets to be too much, the Dark Umbra goes nuts. Storms worse than anything possible in the living world scourge the Underworld. Rains of burnt rusted metal and the ghosts of shapeless creatures that died out before fish were little more than a gleam in Gaia's eye. Twisted spirits, as bad as any fomor or Black Spiral Dancer boil up out of the tunnels that link the Dark Umbra to Malfeas, attacking anything that isn't one of them. Much of the Penumbra of Death is a wasteland now, populated only by small, well-armed kingdoms that dwell in the ghosts of cities.

These storms always follow some bad event in the living world. And I don't mean like "a fire burns down a town" bad. There were two storms like this last century. One started as the as the result of the unprecedented carnage of the First World War being followed so quickly by the global Influenza epidemic. The other started at the end of World War Two. Most Garou who've heard about that think it was the A-bombs that did it. Me, I just think those were the straws that broke the camel's back. Before that, you'd had almost a decade of war and genocide throughout Europe and Asia. Vik once told me that he figured it was just as well that things went the way the did. He didn't want to think about how bad the storm might have been if it'd had another year and a few million more deaths to power it up. The other storms I know of started with things like the Black Death and the plagues that killed millions of natives once Europeans stumbled across the Americas. This new storm started the same time Anthelios, the Wyrm Star, appeared in the Umbral sky. If we ever needed confirmation that Anthelios was bad news, this would have to be it. Storms like that don't start in the Dark Umbra for no reason. And I think this one is going to blow until the Apocalypse is here.

Caerns

Caerns are where the worlds of spirit and flesh meet. Like us, they are neither one nor the other, but both at once. They are our most holy of sites and we guard them with our lives.

Unfortunately, we have a hard time keeping caerns. A caern isn't something you can leave unattended for a few days or even weeks while you deal with the ghosts you've picked up. So as a result, we don't have that many. The caerns we do have tend to be smaller ones. That way fewer Garou are needed to keep it going, so those of us attached to the caern can work in shifts. Most Strider caerns will have at least two people holding almost every office. That way one can perform her duties for the sept as the other one wanders. Our larger caerns — what few we have — tend to be fairly open to members of other tribes. We can't be all that picky when it comes to getting help. We'll take in anyone, provided they play by our rules.

Our caerns also have the habit of attracting ghosts. I don't know why. Maybe it's just a side effect of that many of us gathering in one place for so long. The troublemakers we banish. It takes time and effort, but we can do it. Others, we'll draft into helping defend the Caern. Ghosts make decent watchdogs. They can see people who can't see them, and some of them can bite pretty hard too.

The most important place in any caern is the Heart, and for us it's no different. But our second most important place is the Graves of the Hallowed Heroes. For us, this is the last connection with those of our tribe who've died. All we have left are memories, and spending time among the Graves helps us to remember. Those caerns we control always have an additional office that other tribes don't. It's

called the Memory Keeper. Her job is to oversee the Graves and to remember all those buried there. It's a lesser office, but an important one nonetheless. Her job is similar to that of both the Keeper of the Land and the Talesinger, and most pull double duty as one of those offices. In caerns where we aren't in charge but several of our fallen are buried there, one of the Striders whose circuit takes her to the caern on a regular basis serves as Memory Keeper for our dead. Often she serves as an assistant to the caern's regular Keeper of the Land, and most take the time to learn the stories of those fallen Garou from the other tribes as well.

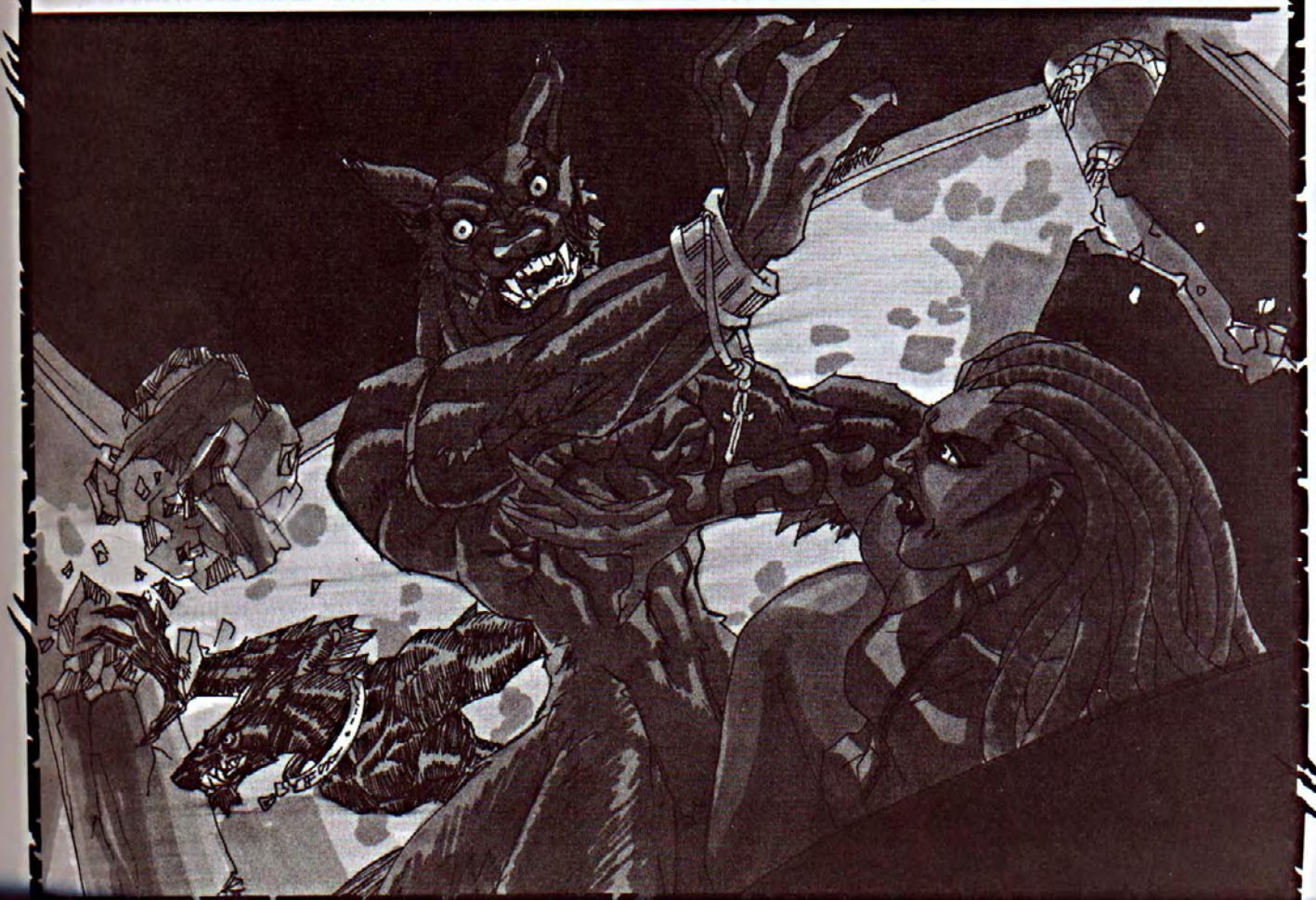
When we join other septs, we most often serve as part-time Guardians. When we're within the caern itself, we act as any other Guardian. When the curse forces us to wander for a while, we make our circuit through the lands surrounding the caern. Here we look for any signs of possible threats. When we find them, we eliminate the threat if possible. If not, we return to the caern to warn others.

All Over the World

And then there's the world of flesh. The material world. I will say this about being a tribe of nomads: We get to go everywhere. Even those of us who stick close to one place get to meet tribemates who've been places most Garou would never dream of going. I like to think that it helps give us a broader perspective on the world. We see the forest where others only see the trees, so to speak.

Khem (Egypt)

Best to start at the beginning, I guess. Egypt was our home. Egypt will be our home again. Few of us live in Egypt any more. Those of us that do mostly live in the surrounding areas, moving in and out of our lost homeland as necessary. Khem is a dangerous place, and even our fellow Garou are often too preoccupied with their own concerns to help us. It is an ancient land, overrun with ancient vampires. The Cult of Sutekh makes its home there, and its leaders are very old and very dangerous. For centuries, they've wormed their way into the human power structures, corrupting the nation from the shadows. But now we hold out hope that their reign may be at an end. Buries-the-Dead, the greatest living vampire slayer of our tribe, is gathering forces for a war against Egypt's undead. Dozens of young Striders, as well as their packs and allies, are flocking to the region hoping to join Buries-the-Dead's crusade. Some come seeking glory. Others come seeking revenge. All come seeking the destruction of the Cult of Sutekh. I wouldn't care to lay odds on the outcome. Buries-the-Dead has been careful about gathering allies and weapons. But Egypt, like Europe, is home to some of the oldest and most powerful vampires in the world. I think this war will be a bloody one, and will see a great deal of death for our tribe. It may even be the first battleground of the Apocalypse. But



even if it isn't, the outcome may be critical for our tribe. If Buries-the-Dead succeeds, it will change everything. If she fails, we will have lost many that cannot be replaced. But even if her plan fails, better to try for victory and fail than to admit failure before you start.

The Middle East

Outside of Egypt, you find North Africa and the Middle East. Since we can't live in Egypt, a lot of us go for the next best thing. We've lived among the Bedouins and Tuaregs for thousands of years, with numerous bloodlines spread across several tribes. The region's traditional tribal cultures work in our favor, with arranged marriages often within extended families enabling us to create some of our best homid breeding stock. Those same tribal relations also mean that our Kin will close ranks and support their family members any way they can.

That part of the world used to be a pretty nice place, from our point of view. For a bunch of reasons, the Middle East fell behind the West technologically and economically. You see, what happened is that in that part of the world, the Patriarch — the Weaver Incarna of Dogma — became the dominant force, even to the expense of his brethren, the Science Incarna and The Machine God. The result was stagnation, both social and technological. But while the humans were ensnared by the Weaver, the lack of an Industrial Revolution kept out all of the pollution and misery that gave the Wyrm such a foothold in the West. This also meant that the deserts and wilderness remained close to the Wyld and to Gaia. It wasn't quite Ma'at, but it was closer than what was going on in Europe.

Unfortunately, then came a century or two of Imperialism, followed by a few decades of Arab Nationalism, Wahhabism and a bunch of other 'isms. All of that hatred and resentment has made a fertile breeding ground for the Wyrm, and all of that oil money is giving the Machine God an inroad into the region. We'd be perfectly happy if the entire Islamic world went back to the way it was a thousand years or more ago. Hell, we'd be even happier if everyone in the world left the cities and lived as nomadic tribes. None of that is going to happen. So the next best thing is to do what we can to try and harness that resentment for our own ends. We make attacks on Western owned oil, shipping and telecommunication companies, and even against Leeches when we can. We encourage our Kinfolk to do the same. If I were human, I might look at the whole thing differently. But I'm not. I was created with the express purpose of protecting the world. Not humans. The entire world. And if deadly force is what it takes to keep the Wyrm and the Machine God out of a large part of the world, so be it.

Africa

Africa has never been friendly to the Garou. The only wolves there are the handful of Kin near North Africa we watch over and protect. The other tribes mostly ignore the continent. Sure, there's a small line of Afrikaner Get who've been all but forgotten by the rest of their kind, and a few Black Furies trying to do their thing in some of the most remote regions, but they're few and far between. Africa is primarily the Fera's land, not ours. Pissing them off is a quick way to an early grave. Keep that fact in mind and remember what the Litany says about the territory of others and you'll do okay.

Most of our African tribe members are from along the Nile River, down in the Sudan. Ethiopia also plays home to some of us, if for no other reason than it's home to the last wolves in Africa. The rest of us tend to come from the Tuaregs who live in Mali, Niger and the rest of that area. The lack of wolves means that most African Striders are homid or metis, but our Kin in Ethiopia produce some lupus. We've always walked softly in Africa. The local Fera's attitudes toward us have always ranged from grudging tolerance to outright hatred. Black Tooth fell into the second group. But then he apparently hated everyone, and everyone hated him right back. And there's nothing better for bringing together a bunch of people who don't like each other like someone all of them like even less.

Black Tooth got to be such a pain for the Fera that they decided to stomp on him hard. In fact, they were so serious about it that they even asked us for help. Our leader in those parts, Walks-With-Might, decided that this was too great an opportunity to pass up and agreed to help. So we went to war again Black Tooth and his posse of werelions. When the dust settled, Black Tooth was dead and everyone was wondering what to do next. And then someone had an idea.

The Ahadi is a pact between the shapeshifters of Africa. Well, most of them, anyway. The terms are pretty simple. Everyone agrees to respect each other's territory, and everyone helps each other battle the Wyrm in Africa. As Gaia's Fangs, that means we — along with the local Red Talons, who are the only other tribe with any real numbers in Africa — get to provide a lot of the muscle. In return, the Fera act as our eyes and ears, watch our backs during the fight, and any other general acts of support they're capable of. And there you have it. The single most revolutionary event in the recent history of the Garou Nation. For the first time since the fucking War of Rage, a bunch of shapeshifters has agreed to work together the way Gaia intended us to. And to think, it only took a few thousand years.

The Ahadi is still a new thing, and some folks are afraid it won't last. I am slightly more optimistic. So are some others. From what I've heard, there are plans to try and establish a new caern in Africa. A caern that serves the Ahadi as a whole rather than just a single breed. I

have no idea how the logistics of that would work. I'm not even sure if the Fera have caerns. But if it works, it might go a long way toward strengthening the pacts.

There've also been noises made about inviting others into the Ahadi. I'm not sure who there is to invite. Africa's native Fenrir number less than a dozen, and they've spend the past two decades doing nothing but trying to protect their three or four Kin families from countless threats. The Black Furies are in a similar situation, focusing all of their resources on defending a caern somewhere in the Congo. From everything I've heard about the handful of Bone Gnawers who live in South Africa, they keep to themselves and largely ignore the rest of the Garou Nation. On the other hand, some of the Bone Gnawers in North Africa might be more open to the idea. Some Glass Walkers operate in Africa's cities, but Gaia only knows what the Fera would think of inviting them in. Outside of us and the Talons, African Garou are really more of a curiosity than an institution. That leaves other Fera, and so far the rats, spiders and other things living there haven't responded to any of our invitations.

India

India was one of the first places part of our tribe tried to settle after leaving Egypt. Some of us are actually still there. The Garou of India are a pretty insular lot. They've got a pretty rigid social hierarchy set up over there, mostly based on the human system, and since we came in late, we've always been kind of low on the totem pole, so to speak. Those Striders who are born and bred in India and make an effort to fit in are pretty much on the level of the Shudra, or commoners, along with local Red Talons, Children of Gaia and Black Furies. The only ones lower on the totem pole than us are the Bone Gnawers, who are just about Dahlit, or untouchables, only not quite as bad off. Above us are the Glass Walkers (like the Vaishya merchants), the Silver Fangs (in the Kshatriya warrior place), and the Stargazers (sort of Brahmin priests, only not quite as "our word is law").

However, a new wrinkle has upset the stability of this society. Seems a growing number of lupus and their supporters are rebelling against this system. These revolutionaries, called the Camp of Shiva, think the other Garou have been getting too attached to the humans and as a result have been trying to be more human than Garou. The Camp of Shiva wants the local humans to get the hell out of their way, and really don't give a damn if any of them get killed in the course of us doing our duty to protect Gaia. After all, there'll always be more humans, but there's only one Gaia. Indian Striders are sort of split on the issue. Most of those who come down on the traditionalist side are members of the Dispossessed. The Camp of Shiva includes several prominent members of the Harbingers, which has lent a lot of strength to the sect's arguments.

Beyond that whole squabble, some of our Indian tribemates want to try and extend the Ahadi to include India's Fera. Easier said than done. Helping that plan is the fact that most of India's Fera are the same kinds who live in Africa, and they talk with their cousins. As long as the Ahadi looks like it's working, they aren't closed to the idea. Our fellow Garou, on the other hand, are less interested. The traditionalists aren't sure where the Fera would fit into their social pecking order, so are skeptical of the idea. On top of this, members of the Camp of Shiva have already started trying to forge alliances with India's rat and tiger born Fera, and some traditionalists point to this as proof that alliances with the Fera are a bad idea. On the other hand, maybe it's just another sign that the Camp of Shiva is India's future.

One good thing I can say about India: there doesn't seem to be that many vampires these days. It looks like the recent supernatural cataclysm in Bangladesh thinned their numbers a bit. A pity it couldn't have happened in Egypt instead.

Asia

Aside from the nomads of the Middle East, Central Asia is probably the greatest success story we've ever had. Vast open steppes, populated by nomadic horse clans. Its perfect for us, and we took to it like ducks to water. There are even more wolves here than there are in the Middle East, so it's played a significant role in keeping our tribe's wolf blood strong. We have several strong lines of Kin in the region, both among wolf packs and among human families.

For most of the 1990s, our interests in Central Asia were forcibly divided. On the one side, you had those of us who lived in the former Soviet Republics. The Striders in those regions were trapped behind the Shadow Curtain that cut Russia off from the rest of the world. The armies of the Wyrm Hag, Baba Yaga assaulted them. They joined with the rest of Russia's Garou out of the need for mutual survival. Now that the Hag has been defeated, those Striders who are veterans of the war have forged bonds of trust, respect and friendship with the other Garou of the former Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the Striders of Mongolia and western China found themselves in a difficult bind. All those they sent into the former Soviet Union to learn what happened to their fellows never returned. The loss of such large swaths of territory also made travel to India and the Middle East difficult. So instead, those Striders turned east for aid. Unlike a lot of other tribes, we've never gone out of our way to be assholes to the people whose territory we visit and since we don't make waves

they just pretend we aren't there. It's a good policy and it's served us well over the centuries. Because of that, the hengeyokai don't consider us to be the same sort of ignorant barbarians the rest of our kind are. So, fearing the worst, the Mongolian Striders began making more overtures to the hengeyokai's Beast Courts. The Beast Courts are like the Ahadi, only a lot older and more established. All the Fera live and work together in some sort of elaborate pecking order. From what I understand, the majority of us who are actually part of the Beast Courts are members of something called the Ambassadors. They're kind of a wandering sept who travel East Asia hoping to build stronger alliances between *hengeyokai* caerns and even find allies among other supernatural creatures for when the Apocalypse comes. Those Striders among the sept apparently pull double duty, trying to build better ties with other Asian Garou and finding allies among China's Underworld.

Now that the Shadow Curtain has dropped, the Silent Striders of Asia are getting to know each other again. In the ten years of separation, they did drift apart, but not too badly. There is a unique opportunity here, I think. One faction of the Striders has forged strong ties to the Garou Nation in Russia. The other faction has made inroads into the Beast Courts of China. If the two factions can repair the — thankfully minor — rift between them, they might be able to act as a bridge between the Garou and the Asian Fera. I may be hoping for too much, but I always was an optimist.

Europe

We never bothered much with Europe. When we left Egypt, some of us wandered the Mediterranean, living as sailors and pirates. A few of us poked around Europe's coast lines, but for the most part, there were already too many other Garou there and they didn't really like us sniffing around their territory. Visiting was fine, but trying to set up shop and raise a family was frowned upon. Not that it stopped us, mind you. But only a few Strider lines in Europe trace themselves back to those ancient voyagers.

Most of the European born Striders these days are of Rroma descent. They typically hail from Eastern Europe and parts of Russia where the Rroma have been living — settled down, mind you and not wandering — for a few hundred years. The *Porrajmos* — the Holocaust — destroyed far too many of our bloodlines, but others have survived. We're something of an invisible minority in Europe, but we're there.

Because most of our lines live in Eastern Europe, the European members of our tribe are far more likely to dwell among the halls of the Shadow Lords than those of the Silver Fangs. So it should come as no surprise that the European branch of our tribe now happily follows the banner of Margrave Yuri Konietzko,

the new leader of the Shadow Lords. The Margrave is trying to unite the Garou of Europe under his leadership. The Rroma Striders follow him for three reasons. One is that he's never fucked them over. They aren't naïve enough to think that he might not do it later, but for now he appears honorable. Second is that the man is actually competent and has done everything he's said he would. He gets things done. And third, the Margrave has a reputation as an enemy of the undead.

The Rroma Striders still retain some of their mortal upbringing, including the cultural taboos about spiritual cleanliness. Vampires are heavily *marimé*. Not only are they dead, but they also feed on blood, which is also taboo. So our tribe's natural hatred of the Undead is compounded in their case. They aid the Margrave in his battles against the undead and against the forces of the Wyrm which feed on the butchery and suffering in the Balkans. In return, they hope that Eastern Europe might become a temporary homeland for our tribe and that the Margrave and those he gathers under his banner might help us in our war to retake Egypt. Maybe it's a pipe dream, I don't know. Time will tell, I guess.

North America

North America is, in many ways, a Garou paradise. Yes, there are cities and pollution and lots of other problems, but there are more of us here than any other place in the world. And not just more homids, but more lupus as well. Every tribe has a significant presence here, and we're no exception.

America is and always has been the land of the drifter. For as long as there was a Wild West, there were folks who'd just pack up and head out into the great unknown. Even after the frontier closed, people still kept getting the itch to just get out and see something new. You've got to admire that. Sure, these days, most monkeys would just as soon sit on their ass and watch TV, but there's always going to be those who want to see something more. And we're wandering right along side them.

The western half of the United States might not be so wild any more, but its still appealing to us. All that wide open space out there in the planes and the deserts and the badlands. In some places, you can walk for days and never see a town. It's perfect for us. You find a lot of American Striders who fancy themselves as modern day cowboys, traveling from place to place and sleeping out under the stars. Others take Jack Kerouac as their role model, sticking to the highways and interstates in their search for fun, trouble and self-discovery.

In the eastern half of the county, most of us stick with the rivers. Must be a holdover from the days when we wandered up and down the Nile. Striders travel up and down the Mississippi, the Missouri and other waterways, watching for trouble among the local river spirits and picking up ghosts who've died in watery graves. For human born Garou, the music of the river becomes a big part of the lifestyle. Most of us know the location of every decent juke joint and honky-tonk from New Orleans to Chicago and all points in between.

One bit of Strider culture that's unique to America is what I call Trolling for Psychos. You see, America has a minor problem with serial killers. Sure, they show up in other countries, but when you get this sort of combinations of lots of towns and cities separated by stretches of wilderness, it makes dumping bodies too easy. Every one of the little bastards has their own special malfunction, but you get a fair number who are either drifters or who prey on them. So some of us hitchhike or else spend time hanging around truck stops, bus stations and other places where some of these people hunt. And with luck, they decide to make us their next victim. I assume you can guess what happens then. The game has caught on with some Garou from other tribes. I've seen some Striders who make contests of it, especially with Bone Gnawers. Of course, we usually win. We get to cheat by asking the ghosts of previous victims, after all.

Canada doesn't have as many of us, really. We've never really been drawn to the colder climates. We visit, sure. But we never stay all that long. Still, sometimes things happen to draw our attention. Take Vancouver, for example. A few years ago, someone in Vancouver got this absolutely ingenious idea of trying to make peace with the local vampires. And of course, not only did the vampires turn around and stab the local Garou in the back, it cost them a caern in the process. Now in my mind, that kind of stupidity is inexcusable and whoever came up with that idea should be skinned alive if he hasn't been already. But, thankfully those Garou in Vancouver who actually survived the entire clusterfuck have finally got their heads out of their asses. They want revenge. And they want to drive the Leeches away from the last remaining caern in the city. So they've been looking for outside help. Enter us. We hate vampires. And we travel all over the place, so we know where to go to find other people who'd like to kill vampires. The plan is to do what we did in Chicago a decade ago. (I wasn't even a year past my Rite of Passage and I'll be damned if that wasn't some of the biggest fun I've ever had in my life. Ah, to be young and believe you're invincible.) Gather packs from all over and turn them lose on the city. Hit fast and cripple or destroy them before they can react and start organizing a counterattack. A lot of us are looking at Vancouver as a potential testing ground for what might happen in Egypt. Anything we learn there can only be a boon to Buries-the-Dead and her followers.

Mexico is another place that's crawling with bloodsuckers. It's also crawling with Banes, Black Spiral Dancers and fomori. The Septs in Mexico tend to be fairly isolated

and paranoid. Members of our tribe play a vital role there, helping to keep those septs in touch with each other and bringing news from the outside world. We also do our usual service as scouts, bringing advanced warning of threats so that the caerns have time to prepare for the next attack. And our experience as vampire hunters is always appreciated.

South America

Heading south, we come to South America. There's only a handful of Garou native to the region. Uktena mostly, with some Bone Gnawers and Glass Walkers in the cities. A few others here and there. Most are from elsewhere. The big focus, of course, is on the Amazon. For about fifteen years or so, it's been a war zone. You should already know the story about the war. For the most part, we work as scouts and assassins, as well as grunts. Unfortunately, all the Garou being there has pissed off the local Fera. I can understand their reaction. Bad enough that monkeys are tearing down their home, but now it looks like Garou are invading and stealing their land.

Some of the Striders down there got the idea of trying to create something like the Ahadi down there as well. Unfortunately, most of the Garou there don't subscribe to our Don't Be An Asshole philosophy. And the local Fera aren't used to us, the way the African ones are. Don't know us and don't trust us. A few optimists have made noises about going to Africa and asking for help from some of the Fera there, in the hope that the creatures in the Amazon might listen to their cousins. For all I know this might be like asking the Fianna to help you talk to the Wendigo. Others have talked about trying to organize those Garou who are willing to exist in peace with the Fera and take over the war effort, forcing the more hostile Garou out. But too many worry that doing so would turn into a civil war and leave an opening for the Wyrm to win. There are no easy answers here. Such is life.

Australia

Finally, we come to Australia. Saving the worst for last, so to speak. It's a desolate place, really. And for the life of me, I can not figure out how a land so inhospitable to our kind has attracted so many Garou. There are no native wolves, the local Fera don't like us, and the local spirits hate our guts. Yet members of every tribe try to make their home here. Part of the reason Australia's spirit world is so hostile to us is because we helped kill all the Garou who used to live there. And by "we," I mean us and all the other tribes. Sure, a few of our tribe actually tried talking to the Bunyip. That's always been our way. Don't Be An Asshole. It was their land and we were just passing through. But we were the ones who brought back information to the other tribes of what the Outback and the Dreamtime were like. We were the ones who showed them where the Bunyip and their Kin lived. And we were the one's who didn't try to stop them when they did it. Evil triumphing while good men do nothing and all that. So now the Australian Umbra is haunted by spirits few of the local Garou understand, many of them born of pain and genocide and Rage. The Dark Umbra is even worse. Half the ghosts there — all of them white folks; I've yet to hear of anyone actually meeting an Aboriginal ghost — have been driven mad by the voices of the past. Ghosts being haunted. It'd be funny if it wasn't so fucking tragic.

Yet still, some of us manage to survive there. Striders in Australia mostly focus one puzzling out the lost secrets of the Umbra or uncovering what they can of the Bunyip's legacy. Except for one group. There's an all-Strider pack called the Strider Circus. They travel Australia with an entourage of their Kinfolk, performing for Garou and humans alike. Most of their material is traditional Aboriginal stuff. Native music and dance, and storytelling. They tell the stories and legends of the Aborigines to anyone who'll listen, as well as the stories of how they were driven from their lands, murdered and their culture almost destroyed. When performing for Garou, they also tell the stories of how our ancestors killed the Bunyip. Supposedly, they do this to make amends for the past and to appease Australia's spirits.

Unfortunately, this just feeds into this giant cult of guilt and shame the Australian Garou have built for themselves. They spend so much time angsting about past mistakes that they're losing sight of the present and the future. They all sit around feeling sorry for themselves and for the past, falling into Harano and not being able to do anything about the problems of today. I said it before and I'll say it again: the only thing the past is good for is enriching the present. But for the Garou of Australia, the past has become an anvil chained to their necks. They're drowning and they need to cut it loose. What's done is done, and there's nothing you can do to change it. Saying you're sorry won't bring the dead back and obsessing over things you can't change is a waste of time and energy. Sitting around feeling sorry for yourself doesn't do a damn thing to protect Gaia. Yes, we have a duty to remember what we as a people did to the Bunyip. We remember it because we need to learn from it. We need to understand how and why it happened, not to show us how stupid and evil we are, but to make sure something like that never happens again. That is the *only* worthwhile reason for remembering past mistakes.

The Other People on the Road

So, that's the world. But we share it with others, of course. There's our fellow Garou and our overall culture to contend with. Not to mention the countless other

creatures under the sun. Some are friends, some are foes. But they're out there, and you'll have to deal with them eventually. That's what happens when you move around a lot. The more you know about the people out there, the better prepared you are for when you meet them.

The Litany

As upstanding, forthright members of the Garou Nation, it's important for us to know all the rules. It's also important to understand the spirit of those rules. If all you focus on are the words, when it comes time to decide if the rule applies or not, you waste time arguing over this word or that word and how it applies. But if you understand the spirit of the thing, then you know, instinctively, when it applies.

Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou

Sigh. Why the fuck is this one so hard for people to understand? No, I don't care that you're both head over heels in love and no, I don't care that you're "being careful." What you are being is an incredibly selfish bastard. All you are caring about is your own needs and wants and you are completely ignoring everyone else involved. For Garou, mating and sex is not just a private activity between two people. We have a sacred duty to Gaia to continuously increase the sizes of our bloodlines. Metis are a dead end in the bloodline. We're a dying race and the more fertile Kin and Garou we have, the better our odds of survival. And if we die out, Gaia has no Fangs to protect Her. The Wyrm wins and we have failed the duty appointed to us. You are ignoring Gaia's needs for your own selfish pleasure. You are also ignoring the needs of your offspring. If you produce a metis, all you have to live with is scorn and shame. Your kid has to live with all of that plus crippling deformity or even insanity. And for our metis, it's even worse. They start attracting ghosts from birth, and unlike you, they can't run away from them. You are inflicting on that kid a lifetime of pain and shame, all because you couldn't keep it in your pants.

If I seem like a hard-ass about the subject it's for a simple reason. We're the only tribe who can't disown our metis. Every metis that carries our blood also carries our curse from birth. At least the female half of our tribe doesn't run off and pretend it never happened. I've met too many jackasses in this tribe who think that just because they don't have to stick around and deal with the consequences, it's okay to leave some local girl high and dry with their inbred freak of a kid. Luckily most of them don't escape that easy. Owl has a habit of eventually leading his metis children to their parents. And Gaia help you if your partner decides to kill the cub to hide her own shame. That's one ghost you almost never outrun.

Combat the Wyrm Wherever It Dwells and Wherever It Breeds

This one is fairly straightforward. If you find a creature of the Wyrm, you combat it. That's your job as one of Gaia's Fangs. That said, it's also your job to not get yourself killed if you can help it. If you find something that's too big for you and your pack to handle on your own, go and get help. Then come back and deal with it. There's a reason why our people consider Wisdom to be just as important as Glory. Just try to remember that there are other ways to combat things than by killing it. Humans and animals haunted by Banes can be exorcised. Poisoned lands can be cleansed. Corruption can be weeded out. If it's a vampire, though, kill it. Always.

Respect the Territory of Another

This is one of our tribe's two most important rules. The curse dictates that we have to spend at least part of our time drifting from one place to the other. Hence, our basic rule of Don't Be An Asshole. Announce your presence to any caern you come close to. Follow whatever rules they have. And if they ask you to leave, do so. This rule doesn't just apply to the Garou, either. For us, it applies to the Fera as well. We travel in lands where our kind aren't looked upon all that fondly, and the only reason we have survived doing so while others have failed is because we respect the territory of the natives. That's why this rule is also the cornerstone of the Ahadi. It's good manners and good sense.

Accept an Honorable Surrender

Another simple one. As I said before, we're a dying race. We can't afford to be killing each other. If you can't control yourself enough to recognize when another Garou yields, you have a problem. And if you kill another Garou over something petty and stupid — and I'm firmly of the opinion that anything that doesn't involve someone having fallen to the Wyrm is pretty petty — you might find that your deeds literally come back to haunt you.

Submission to Those of Higher Station

Respect your elders. We only have access to their wisdom and secrets for as long as they are here, so learn from them while you can. That doesn't mean coddling a fool. If you come across someone of a higher rank who happens to be a complete git, just nod and smile at his bullshit. The exception is if that bullshit is something that is going to get other Garou killed, threaten the security of the caern or otherwise result in some major fuck up. If that happens, you have a responsibility to challenge him. But if someone has honestly learned the right to lead, we will follow.

The First Share of the Kill for the Greatest in Station

The best example for understanding the spirit and not the letter of the Litany. Basically, whenever a group of Garou finds some cool shit, the leader gets first pick of what he wants to keep. By and large, the only things we own are what we can carry with us. So our "cool shit" tends to be information. Tell your elders everything you've learned. Then they can decide what information is worth their remembering it. As for fetishes and other material goodies, our elders are usually pretty easy-going when it comes to letting the young keep what they find. The only exceptions are if the kid finds something really dangerous, which he either has no idea how to use safely or can't protect it properly, or when a group of Wayfarers work together, and the oldest member always makes sure he gets what's rightfully his.

You Shall Not Eat the Flesh of Humans

Monkey meat is addictive. If you try it once, the Wyrm gets a hold of you and then you want more and more and can't stop. I've never understood why anyone'd want to eat a human anyway. With all the shit they eat, they're probably poisonous. And obviously, this rule applies to the flesh of wolves and other Garou as well.

Respect Those Beneath You — All Are of Gaia

Gaia charged us to defend and protect the world and everything in it. To kill and destroy without reason is to betray Gaia's trust. To hunt without honoring the spirit of your prey is to disrespect Ma'at and the prey's role under it. This rule also applies to Garou of lesser rank. The young are our future. When I die, their memories will be all that remain of me in this world. I'd just as soon not be remembered for being a dick, thanks.

The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted

Again, this is common sense. If humans found out we lived among them, there'd be mobs armed with flame-throwers and silver bullets out for our hides. So don't go around taking Crinos form in front of crowds and for fuck's sake don't tell them about us. And that goes for *all* humans. I don't give a fuck what you've heard about Gypsies or Native Americans or whoever the Little Brown Brother *du jour* is. If they're Kin, then they should already have been told all they need to know, just like any other Kin. If they aren't, then they don't need to know shit and they don't have access to some secret ethnic mystical insight into who we are either. And besides, if you can't keep your mouth shut about our existence, what the fuck are you doing in *this* tribe anyway?

Do Not Suffer Your People to Tend Your Sickness

This one's a sticky one for us. You see, we value our elders, as we can't learn from their wisdom once they're gone. But if he can't outrun the ghosts any longer, then he might end up going mad. If one of us dies in battle, we do like we did with Vik: bury the body, mourn the spirit and honor the memory. But if one of us starts to get to where he's a burden on others, we have our other death rite. The elder will gather as many tribemates as he can around him and tell them his life story. Everything he's done and everything he's learned. Then he goes off into the Umbra to make one last quest for the Tribal Homeland. And he's never seen again. Better to end your days doing something than to give in and let someone else end your life for you.

The Leader May Be Challenged at Any Time During Peace

This is the way of things. Constant challenges keep a good leader sharp and keep a bad leader from being a leader. When it comes to challenges, most other Garou expect us to favor facedowns and gamecraft. And, yes, we're good at that. We go places and see things that would scare most folks shitless, so we aren't easily intimidated. Owl doesn't want dullards for children, so most of us work at keeping our minds sharp. However, since we don't go around bragging about our great warrior traditions, they also expect us to be pushovers in trials by combat. Few make that mistake twice.

The Leader May Not Be Challenged During Wartime

Again, this is the way of things. In battle, lives depend on people doing what they are told and acting without hesitation. But it's also possible for a leader to give bad orders. And that can lead to failure or even to pointless deaths. There is no good guideline here. You just have to be smart enough to be able to tell the difference between a good order and a bad order, and to be smart enough to know when a leader might just be good enough that he's giving what seems like a bad order for a good reason you haven't figured out yet. Sound unfair? Well, life's tough.

You Shall Take No Action That Causes a Caern to Be Violated

Or you die. End of story. This is the other of our two most important rules. Once, we lost the lands Gaia entrusted to us. Never again. We defend every caern to the death. No one besides Garou and trusted Kin are allowed in. Only in the lands of the Ahadi is this rule even

slightly different. There, it's possible that a known and trusted member of one of the Fera might be admitted. But no others. If wizards or other creatures feel the need to meet with us, they can do so somewhere other than a caern. If any vampire ever comes anywhere near a caern, we kill it. If one of their blood slaves comes near a caern, he's tortured until he tells us everything about his master. Then we kill him and hunt down the creature that sent him. And if you ever, ever bring a vampire to one of our caerns, we will not only kill you, we will see to it that your soul is destroyed and your name stricken from every record we have. In this, there is no compromise.

Archetypes: The Tribes

So, those are the rules of the Garou Nation. And we share those rules with the rest of our brothers in arms. Now, we travel all over the place and make a concerted effort to talk to each other, it helps us get a much bigger perspective on the way things are. Everyone else only sees the people they are around every day, and that small sample becomes their impression of what the other tribes are like. Never mind that a Black Fury from Alexandria, Virginia might not be anything like her sisters in Alexandria, Egypt. We can't do that. When you travel from place to place, you don't have the luxury of just assuming that everyone of this tribe acts that way while everyone from that tribe acts this way. You have to take a step back from what's in front of you and look at what you've seen in a bunch of different places. When you do that, you start to see what different members from different tribes have in common, even when they're from different corners of the world. You have to learn to recognize and understand the archetypes, not the stereotypes. When you can do that, you can understand how to deal with a member of another tribe no matter where he's from.

The Pariah Tribes

We'll start with the low men on the totem pole. The Pariah tribes are those who, for whatever reason, have fallen away from the mainstream of our society. They are different, and like every other animal, we equate different with scary and troubling. The Pariahs make us uncomfortable because they are different. And that might end up being their undoing.

Bone Gnawers

Rat's Children live in filth. They're an unruly mob who barely lives on the fringes of the Garou Nation. The other tribes look down on them for their undistinguished lineage and spit on them for being the omega wolves. And the Bone Gnawers don't care. All that matters to them is survival. Just living another day is a victory for one of them. And they manage to survive in places that have a thousand ways to kill you. They also keep their eyes open. Rat's children see all. And if you ask nicely — read, you bribe them — they might tell you what they know. In spite of the difference between our spiritual patrons, they can be powerful allies. Especially in a fight, because they fight dirty. Just don't ever condescend to them. They aren't stupid, so don't treat them like they are.

Glass Walkers

Cockroach's children are too infatuated with the Weaver. They've lived among the monkeys for so long that they've forgotten what it's like to be wolves. The other tribes worry that they'll soon become to the Weaver what the Black Spiral Dancers are to the Wyrm. The Glass Walkers scoff at this, thinking we're all too hidebound and backward. They're obsessed with progress (or what they consider to be progress, anyway). Always moving forward, never looking back. They've adapted to the modern urban jungle, and thrive in it. Regardless of their flaws, we need them. Their understanding of the Weaver will be vital when it comes to restoring Ma'at. Their understanding of human institutions and modern warfare can be powerful weapons in our war against the undead. There is only one thing about them I consider unforgivable. How can a tribe willingly turn its back on their ancestors? The pure hubris of the thing is unbelievable. Do they really not understand what they're giving up?

Red Talons

Homer once wrote, "There are no compacts between lions and men, and wolves and lambs have no concord." Such is the way of the Red Talons. Griffin's children are angry, and consumed with hate for the human race. They have every reason to be. Man has hunted our wolf Kin to near extinction, and wiped out countless other species. Even the so-called "Pure Ones" whom the Wendigo revere wiped out the mammoth and other species. The Red Talons were charged by Gaia to watch over, protect and guide our wolf Kin. And they have failed. We, more than most, can empathize. But Gaia made us from human as well as wolf, and the Red Talons have forgotten this. They have lost touch with their human side even more than the Glass Walkers have lost touch with their wolf half. In doing so, they have also lost touch with the other tribes. They no longer understand us, and we're rapidly losing our understanding of them. I fear only the worst can come of this.

Bunyip

The last of the Pariah tribes is the lost one. The Bunyip isolated themselves from the rest of the Garou Nation. Their ways and even their forms became strange and alien to us. So alien, in fact, that we were willing to kill them because we could no longer under-

stand them. The wisdom and strength of Rainbow Serpent's children were lost to us, and their protectorate is the worse for that loss. All because they became something too different for us to accept.

And that is the lesson of the Bunyip. The other Pariah tribes must learn from their mistake. If the Bone Gnawers become so disdainful of our ways, if the Glass Walkers become so enamored of the ways of the Weaver and of men, if the Red Talons become nothing more than mindless beasts, the other tribes will turn on them. And kill them. And we will be all the weaker for their loss.

Leadership and Honor

From the lowest to the highest. The tribes of Honor are our leaders. They have, one way or another, earned our respect. And with that respect comes the willingness to follow them. But their honor may well destroy them.

Children of Gaia

Vik once told me that half of what you hear about the other tribes is nothing but lies, and the other half is just half-truths and misunderstandings. I think Unicorn's children might be the ultimate embodiment of that. I always hear people talk about how the Shadow Lords are all these devious manipulators who can't be trusted. If they're such great manipulators, then why does no one trust them? On the other hand, everyone thinks the Children of Gaia are harmless. That's what they want us to think. They've carefully crafted this image of being softheaded happy shiny puppy dogs, and it's the greatest con I've ever seen. Scoff if you will, but remember this: While others talk, we watch and listen. We pay attention to them, and have figured out their plan. You see, the Children of Gaia want to unify the Garou Nation into one big happy uber-tribe. And, of course, they'll get to be the leaders of this new Garou order. Most of this comes from them thinking they have a better understanding of what Gaia wants than the rest of us. They've grown smug and self-righteous in their belief that they know the One True Way. And they want to teach the rest of us poor ignorant savages how to do things the right way (meaning their way). Most of them try to be everyone's buddy, use passive resistance to shame other Garou into not fighting with them and try to lead by example. But some of them think they should start beating the rest of us into line. Don't ever underestimate them. They play the political game better than anyone, and aren't afraid to get their hands dirty when they have to.

Shadow Lords

Speaking of getting your hands dirty. You may be wondering why I list Grandfather Thunder's Children as a tribe of Honor. They're all manipulative backstabbing bastards, aren't they? Well, yes. But they're our manipulative backstabbing bastards. What most folks fail to understand about the Shadow Lords is that they are every bit as honorable as the rest of us. It's just that they subscribe to a radically different idea of what honor is. To the Shadow Lords way of thinking, Gaia has entrusted them — and by extension, all of us — with the most sacred of tasks: safeguard the world against all threats. It's a deadly serious business to them, and one that doesn't allow for mistakes. Their honor demands that they do anything and everything necessary to defend Gaia. They don't have time to play games or handle things with kid gloves just because someone else might object. And if you can't understand the importance of what they're doing, that's your problem.

And yes, they are perfectly happy to manipulate and deceive the rest of us to get ahead. That's because they've spent countless centuries dealing with some of the most intelligent and deceptive creatures the Wyrm ever made: vampires. They know from experience that the Wyrm doesn't always come at you as a gibbering horror trying to tear your face off and suck out your brain through your eye sockets. The Wyrm also comes at you with the face of your best friend, whispering honeyed words in your ear and trying to tempt you away from Gaia with countless empty promises. So the Shadow Lords come at you with the same honeyed words and empty promises. Because if you'll fall for it from them, then you'll fall for it from the Wyrm. And better you lose your klaive or your Kin or your caern to them than to the Wyrm.

Silver Fangs

Our esteemed kings, tsars and pharaohs. Once, Falcon's children were the best and brightest of the Garou Nation. Our greatest heroes and warriors. Men and women of impeccable honor. That was then. For too long, they've coasted by on the deeds of their ancestors. Too many of them seek honor in their pedigrees instead of in their deeds. They've become parodies of themselves. The addle-brained king who sits on his throne, orating about his past deeds as his kingdom falls apart around him. They continue to demand obedience, even if they've done nothing to earn it. And they ruthlessly cling to power, undercutting some of the champions we so desperately need because they're afraid of threats to their rule. This generation of Silver Fangs may be the last, and our fate may hinge on whether or not they can once again find the nobility — true nobility, and not just the trappings of it — they've lost.

Croatan

Turtle's Children were one of the Three Brothers, the three tribes Garou charged to watch over and guard the Americas. The Croatan were the Middle Brother.

Their strong wills and pure hearts made them the tireless earth that protected the Pure Lands from the Eater of Souls. Their honor won them the respect of their brothers, and made them the ones the others looked to for guidance and direction. But their honor also led them to sacrifice themselves. The entire tribe committed suicide to stop the Eater of Souls from materializing in the world. Their sacrifice succeeded, but it left their brothers without the leadership and support they needed. They drifted apart and their protectorates were lost to invading Garou of other tribes.

And this is the lesson of the Croatan. The other tribes' honor may well lead to their own self-destruction. If the Children of Gaia become so intent on trying to unify us that they kill themselves just to prove a point, if the Shadow Lords become so obsessed with protecting Gaia no matter what the cost that they start to look at us as the enemy, if the Silver Fangs allow themselves to rot from the inside and refuse to admit they have a problem, all because their idea of honor demands it, then they will leave the rest of us without the leadership we need. And right now, we need good, dependable leadership more than ever.

War and Glory

Every nation needs its warriors. We, of course, are an entire race of warriors, so when some of us manage to distinguish themselves as a tribe of warriors, that's saying something. Out of all of us, the tribes of Glory are those who meet our enemies head on. They fight with claw and fang, with hammer and klaive, and with every ounce of passion and strength they have. But they are also full of pride. And that pride may be their downfall.

Fianna

Stag's children are driven by passion. It's not just bloodlust, but a lust for life in all its glory that drives them to fight harder and longer. You can have no greater friend and no more persistent enemy than one of the Fianna. They love to swap stories with us, and gladly welcome us to their caerns. To their way of thinking, either we'll bring interesting stories to entertain them or we'll bring warning of monsters for them to go kill. Either way, it results in a lot of celebratory drinking. And fighting. And fucking. Like I said, they're driven by passion. All in all, they're a pretty decent bunch. But I swear, the next American Fianna I see wearing a kilt, I'm going to shove a caber up his ass.

Get of Fenris

Where the Fianna are driven by passion, Fenris' children are driven by strength. Strength is all that they respect. Not just physical strength, but strength of will, of character and of family. War is their proving ground, where they test themselves for the final battle of the Apocalypse. And they continuously test themselves because they know how high the stakes will be in that last fight. That's why they're such belligerent dicks, of course. They continuously test everyone else as well. To their way of thinking, if we aren't strong enough to stand up to them, then how can we possibly be strong enough to stand up to the Wyrm? That said, they have their uses. If you and your pack ever find anything too big to take on by yourselves, these guys are the best ones to go to for help. There's nothing they love better than a good fight. And they're people of their word. If one calls you his friend, take it as a compliment.

Wendigo

Wendigo's children are the second of the Three Brothers. They were the Little Brother who watched over the frozen north, protecting it with their anger and their fury. They were the howling icy wind that tore apart the Beast of War. The Croatan tempered that fury. With their loss, the Wendigo fell to despair. Despair and hate. They hate almost everyone. They hate the European Garou for taking their lands. They hate the Wyrm for taking their brother. They hate the Uktena for betraying their brother's memory. And though they never say it, you can tell the rest by looking in their eyes. They hate the Croatan for leaving them. And they hate themselves for not dying with them. We're one of the few tribes they don't hate. They don't love us, but they don't call us enemy either. We tried to live in peace beside them, and didn't help the other tribes take their lands. But we didn't stand beside them against their enemies either. We can empathize with some of their loss. But I honestly believe they would do a greater honor to the Croatan's memory in fighting by our side, and by the side of the other tribes.

White Howlers

Pity poor Lion. Turtle and Rainbow Serpent have lost their children, but at least their children are dead. Lion's children have betrayed him and Gaia, and their descendants are a mockery of what they once were. The White Howlers guarded over the dark and desolate northern highlands. They were ferocious warriors and masters of strange rites. Like us, they dared to explore the Dark Umbra. But where we went in search of wisdom, they went in search of battle and glory. They feared nothing and believed that they could triumph over any foe. And so in their pride — in their hubris — they went down into the bowels of the earth, and there they fell. Not to death, but to corruption. The White Howlers ceased to exist. What came back out were the Black Spiral Dancers.

And this is the lesson of the White Howlers. Even the greatest warrior needs the aid and support of his

friends and allies. There is no shame in asking for help. There is no glory in a meaningless death, and even less in becoming a servant of the enemy. Pride led the White Howlers to fight a foe that was too great for them to defeat. Whether out of pride, or passion or pain, our warrior tribes might make the same mistake. And it's a mistake we can't afford. We need their strength for the final battle.

Mystery and Wisdom

On the opposite end, we have our mystics. Raw strength and fury alone won't defend Gaia. We need mystical insight and spiritual power as well. So we have the tribes of Mystery.

Black Furies

Pegasus' children are the guardians of the Wyld and of women. They seek wisdom in the hidden mysteries and magic of femininity. I often wonder why we don't also have a tribe that is charged with overseeing men and nurturing the mystical powers of masculinity. Maybe that's what the Glass Walkers were supposed to do, once upon a time. Most ancient cultures understood the power inherent in both sexes, and established fraternities and sororities to pass on the secrets of both. Both aspects are vital to Gaia. Under Ma'at, they are in balance. I fear that the Black Furies may be out of balance. There's also a certain hypocrisy among some of them. It's ironic how a tribe that claims to hate the Weaver so much can be so consumed by the forces of Dogma. For at least half of them, their answer to everything is, "it's a man's fault." The rest of them, on the other hand, are actually useful allies and traveling companions.

Uktena

Older Brother to the Croatan and Wendigo, Uktena's children were the last of the Three Brothers. Gaia gave them the rivers and deserts of the Pure Lands as their protectorate. Their clever minds made them the fluid waters that could slip through the subtle snares and traps of the Defiler Wyrm. They endlessly searched for dark secrets and clever magics to help them bind dangerous Wyrm beasts deep in the earth. The Croatan helped keep them focused, reminding them of the greater purpose behind their search for those secrets. Now, I'm afraid they've become a bit... scattered. Having lost much of their lands, the Uktena have taken it upon themselves to take cultures from around the world under their paw. They go almost as many places as we do. Although different interests may motivate our travels and quests, we still travel together quite a bit. I think they're afraid that the white man, in his race for colonial conquest and exploration, may have unleashed beasts similar to the ones they bound in the Pure Lands. So they try to learn the secrets of these ancient cultures in case they have to rebind something that got loose. But without Middle Brother's guidance, I'm afraid that they might start digging up secrets just for the sake of learning them. All things being equal, they are very good at what they do. But they still give me the creeps.

Stargazers

And finally, the lost tribe of Wisdom. For untold centuries, Chimera's children have struggled to answer the riddle of Ma'at. The secret of how to restore balance to the Triat and to the universe. And in the process, they've discovered countless other useful bits of information. We've always gotten along with them, and we've shared an endless number of stories, campfires and secrets. Unfortunately, their quest for answers has led them away from the rest of us. The Stargazers could survive the loss of their homelands. They've never been overly concerned with material things. But the chance to walk among the *hengeyokai* and learn of their wisdom and of their understanding of the Triat? That was too big of an opportunity for them to pass up. And now, a great deal of their wisdom is unavailable to us when we need it most.

And this is the lesson of the Stargazers. We can not let our quest for the world's secrets distract us from our duty to Gaia and to our fellow Garou. If the Black Furies become too wrapped up in understanding the mysteries of womankind and of the Wyld, if the Uktena become to distracted by the lure of hidden lands and hidden magics, and if we — for we, the Silent Striders, are the other tribe of mystery — become too caught up in learning the mysteries of death and of the open road, then we risk walking away from our fellow tribes. And if we walk away, we deprive them of the secrets and wisdom our kind will need to face the Apocalypse.

The Fera

Then there are the other breeds of shapeshifter. Some are allies, some aren't. I won't give you a laundry list of each and every Breed that ever existed. Half of them are dead, and the rest are so rare that any contact we have with them is strictly a one-on-one deal. If you meet one of the Fera, whatever happens is between you and him. It doesn't become part of some grand tribal policy. However, I will mention the few areas of importance.

The Ahadi

I've already mentioned what the Ahadi is and how it came about. What it means to us is this: If you come across one of the Fera while you are in Africa, you treat her with the same respect you'd want to be given. If

they ask you for help dealing with some Wyrm beast, you give it to them. If they ask you to get the fuck off of their land, you turn around and leave. That's the deal. And if you don't want to honor that deal, you can get the fuck out of Africa. The Mokolé, the Ajaba and the Bastet are some of the only allies we have in that part of the world. We need them. And remember, the Ahadi only applies to Africa. If you stumble across a group of Mokolé in the Amazon or Australia, run.

Corax

I won't speak much about them. Call it professional courtesy. They travel as much as we do, if not more. They act as messengers, even for us. They're about the only Fera we didn't try to kill in the War of Rage. They love to collect secrets and they absolutely hate vampires. What's not to love? Seriously, if you ever meet one, play nice. It'll be a major boon in the long run.

Ratkin

And then there's these fucking bastards. I don't think I've been anywhere where I haven't seen something — some small sign or tiny clue — that these guys have been there. Maybe it's all a big hoax by the Bone Gnawers. I kind of hope so. The bad blood between Owl and Rat means we scrap with the Bone Gnawers from time to time. But it's never a big deal, what with us all being Garou and all. If these guys are out there, I don't think they'll be as friendly as the Bone Gnawers are.

Everything Else Under the Sun

Beyond our people and our closest cousins, there are other things out there in the world. Some are nothing more than curiosities. A tiny handful are occasional allies. And some are our bitterest enemies.

The Undead

Abominations. Corpses who steal the blood of the living so that they can continue their existence — not lives — of treachery and murder. They are creations of the Wyrm deserving nothing but destruction.

The worst of the lot are the Cult of Sutekh. They first appeared in ancient Egypt, and Gaia forgive us for not wiping them out when they first reared their ugly heads. The Cult is just that, a cult. They build blasphemous temples, attract worshipers for their dark religion, and fight with all the ferocity of religious fanatics. Their deceivers are honey-tongued vipers, eager to seduce with lies. Never give them the chance to speak. Anything they say is only calculated to weaken your spirit and your resolve. Their wizard-priests practice dark magics that draw on the power of Apep and the Underworld. Their warriors are ruthless foes who know secrets for turning their dead skin to armored hide and

increasing their unholy strength. One on one, we can triumph over most of them. But they gather in nests, hiding in the shadows of their temples. If you ever find one of the Cult of Sutekh's temples, you have only one duty: report its existence to others. Find the nearest sept and tell them what you've found. Then find any other nearby septs and tell them as well. Gather as many packs as you can, and tear their temple down around their ears. Rip them limb from limb, burn them out with fire and drive them into the sun. Then purify the ruins and drive away whatever Banes they have drawn to their rotted stench.

The Cult of Sutekh aren't the only Leeches, of course. In Arabia, we found the *ghul*, creatures that take the forms of beautiful women to feed on the blood of travelers. India introduced us to the *rakshasa*, demons that possess dead corpses and weave illusions. And then there's the shapeshifting *muló* who dwelled among the Rroma. Other tribes have fought other types of Leeches. The Get of Fenris have been battling the monstrous and warlike *draugr* for countless centuries, and the Shadow Lords have their endless vendettas against the Slavic *vampyrs*. The Glass Walkers give reports of creatures who sit at the head of corporate empires, while the Black Furies talk of Wyrm-witches who've turned themselves into undead sorcerers and the Bone Gnawers tell watchfire stories of inhuman things that dwell in city sewers. All of these creatures are our enemies, and must be destroyed to the last.

The Undying

During our first battles against the Cult of Sutekh, a group of human wizards stumbled on the secrets of immortality. And I mean real immortality, not this "not dead but not alive" shit you sometimes see. Their leader claimed to be Horus, the son of Osiris, and as such declared an eternal bloodfeud against Sutekh and his Cult for killing his dad. And so these immortals have spent thousands of years waging war against the undead. Obviously, we decided it was in our best interest to make friends with these guys. Well, friends is really too strong of a word. Acquaintances, really. We know they exist and they're generally aware of what we are. Because our immediate interests intersect, we work together on occasion. Note the "on occasion." Not "all the time." For one, there are not many of them. And when something happens that would kill them, it takes a while for them to come back to life. So they aren't the most reliable of allies.

Others

There are other things out there. Monkeys who've figured out how to twist and break the names Gaia and the Weaver gave to everything that exists.

Vampire Hunting 101

So you want to kill vampires, kid? Well, listen up. Here are five basic rules that may help save your ass.

1. The Only Good Leech Is a Dead Leech.

Yeah, yeah, they're already dead. But you get the idea. They're a slap in the face of Gaia and of the very laws of nature. Liars and murderers all. And whatever you do, don't fall for that lame "I have a tortured soul and want to make amends" bullshit. If a vampire wants to make amends, he can step into the sun and make amends from the afterlife. Don't make any deals with them, ever. They are smart and devious and practice fucking people over as a hobby.

2. Fire Is Your Friend.

Vampires hate the purity of fire. If you get burned, you'll heal on your own. If they get burned, they have to use that blood they steal from the living to heal themselves. And that's blood they aren't using to fuel their Wyrm powers. Burn down their nests if you have to. Make friends with fire-spirits. Learn the kind of tricks that let you use fire as a weapon or, better yet, make it so you don't have to worry about being burned. Make fetishes and talons that cause things to burn. And don't forget the biggest fire there is: the sun. If you can attack vampires during the day, all the better. The more sunlight you can bring into the combat zone, the greater advantage you'll have.

3. Guns for Show, Klaives and Claws for a Pro

Guns don't do Jack Shit against vampires. Sure, the Glass Walkers might know tricks for making fetish guns that can fuck the bastards up, but that's them, not us. Gaia gave you your teeth and claws, and they are the best weapons in your arsenal. Few Leeches can go toe to toe with us in a fight. Strike fast and strike hard, and if you can, tear their heads off. If you really feel the need for a weapon, use something that cuts hard and deep. Klaives and jambiya are good, if you can get them. D'siah are even better.

4. Strength in Numbers

Depend on your pack. Our packs are the greatest advantage we have. They'll watch your back. And together, you can take down targets you'd never be able to handle on your own. And play off of their strengths. Members of other tribes might have different but effective ways of attacking vampires. Glass Walkers can tear down their support structures. Uktena, Shadow Lords and Bone Gnawers can dig up all sorts of dirty tricks. Get of Fenris can kick the door down and start ripping people's heads off. Don't just stop with your pack, either. If it's a big nest, invite friends. There's plenty of Glory to go around.

5. Don't Be Stupid.

Don't ever get cocky, no matter how good your record. And never, ever plan on the vampire being stupid. That's the kind of thinking that can get you killed. Never, ever underestimate your foe. If nothing else, remember this one.

Humans who can speak to the dead. The Djinn, spirits of smokeless fire. The spirits born from countless campfire tales who've taken up residence in human bodies. As with the Fera, if you ever meet one, what you do with him is your business. Me? I prefer the company of my own kind.

Going Forth by Day

The sun's coming up now. Time to go greet it. To let it remind me that I'm still alive. That I still carry on the struggle for Gaia even though someone I care about has fallen. And that the journey is never over as long as someone is still traveling.

Chapter Three: First Steps

A man should ever be ready booted to take his journey.
— Michel Eyquem De Montaigne

Each tribe in the Garou Nation brings something unique to the fight for Gaia. Here you'll get an idea of what the Silent Striders can bring to the table: their pacts with the spirit world; weapons and tools of tradition and necessity; Gifts and rites collected from the four corners of the globe; and hard-won experience. No two Striders ever share exactly the same experiences, so no two will ever tell a story the same way. So sit back, and figure out what story your Silent Strider character would like to tell.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are an important way to set your introspective Silent Strider apart from his tribemates. When selecting Backgrounds, take care to include some details to accompany your point expenditures ("My primary contact is Erica Jones, a flirtatious archivist at the Library of Congress, who befriended me during some otherwise boring research," rather than "I know some people who help me out with stuff."). Or, if you're in the mood for some dramatic revelations down the road, ask your Storyteller to fill in some specific details. Perhaps you'd like your character to develop a relationship with a mentor down the road, but you'd rather be surprised by which grizzled werewolf steps forward to assume the responsibility. These kinds of details make roleplaying fun — for you and for your Storyteller.

Allies

Since the Striders are always on the move, their fastest friends generally are as well. A frequent-flyer entrepreneurial CEO, a long-haul trucker with a hazmat clearance, a jet-setting playboy, or a sideshow circus freak are all people a Strider might run into during her wanderings — and they all have the mobility to just maybe provide a helping hand, or at least a lift, in a desperate situation. Sedentary types, even childhood friends, usually turn up as Contacts.

Unlike many other tribes of Garou, the Silent Striders can commonly call certain other supernatural beings their allies. Wraiths, the ghosts of the dead, may attach themselves to the werewolf, deciding that they enjoy the vibrant and action-filled life of the Garou. (Note to Storytellers: Wraiths should count as Allies only if they provide the character with more assistance than aggravation.) More open-minded Striders are also known to associate on occasion with human magicians and sorcerers. Even fae creatures fond of

travel might ally themselves with a Silent Strider, if only in defense of a boon travel companion. The curse levied by Sutekh has all but guaranteed, however, that a Strider will never count a Leech among his allies.

Ancestors

Silent Strider characters may not have the Ancestors Background. Sutekh's curse continues to separate the tribe from their fallen heroes and harry them from their homeland.

An optional Merit (The Gift of Wepauwet, p. 87) is detailed later in this chapter. A Storyteller might also wish to consider the possibility of a character contacting her ancestors as part of a story. Such a thing would be incredibly difficult, and likely to involve long-forgotten rituals, dangerous Umbral journeys and conflict with perhaps hordes of Leeches and their spawn. Some caution is warranted when introducing a storyline of such epic proportions — if the pack your players have put together is not all or mostly Silent Striders, some players may feel left out.

Contacts

A Strider's contacts, both major and minor, can be almost anyone, anywhere. Major contacts are likely to be involved in information gathering, be it library science or archeology, or with travel and transport. Minor contacts pop up around the globe in the oddest places. Say, for example, a particular werewolf decided to hop a bus through mountainous terrain in Eastern Europe, rather than jogging through and attracting the attention of the locals. On the long, torturous trip, she becomes acquainted with the locals, and also with the Dutch mountaineer and judo champion, and the French particle physicist who happen to be traveling through. Not only can the Strider perhaps prevail on the locals for a little info if she ever returns, but she also has some people she can look up in Amsterdam or Nice if she needs information on their area, on mountaineering, or (gulp) particle physics. (A Storyteller is certainly justified, however, in raising the difficulty on the roll to find a minor contact if he feels it is warranted: say, trying to scare up a contact in a Bantu village on your first trip to Africa.)

Every Strider with a few thousand miles under her belt also knows that hitting up contacts isn't a one-way street — or it certainly won't be for long. Just as no Garou would dream of asking a spirit for services without offering chiminage, no experienced Strider walks up to a contact empty-handed — even if she only has a bouquet of posies filched from someone's garden. Striders don't have much money and travel light, but they know that a worthless knick-knack in Algiers can be transformed into a classy and thoughtful gift in Akron.

Fetish

As just mentioned, Silent Striders travel light. For fetishes, then, they prefer the portable and practical to the grandiose and showy. As a general rule, if it can't be shoved into a pocket or stuffed into a rucksack, it stays at a Strider caern except in direst need. The d'siah, a smaller, curved blade known to be potent against spirits, is the tribe's traditional melee weapon — in part simply because it is more easily carried than a massive klaive (the other part being that it is incredibly effective against the tribe's oldest foes, the serpent-like vampires of Egypt). The bows and arrows favored by other Garou tribes are right out as well; spirits are enticed instead into slings or even guns. Some typical Silent Strider fetishes are detailed later in this chapter.

Of course, the Striders quite often carry fetishes crafted by other tribes, whether received in payment for services or gleaned from the wreckage of a caern that got a warning too late or not at all. Young Striders quickly learn to keep such items out of sight lest their ownership be challenged, or simply resign themselves to handing such items back to the appropriate tribe.

Kinfolk

The great majority of Silent Strider Kinfolk can be found in northern Africa and the Middle East. The people found in those regions come from a broad array of ethnic groups — invaders and settlers came from north, south, east and west throughout history. To further add to the diversity, the Striders have always felt a bond with the dispossessed, and have sought to bring them into their circle of Kin: most notably the gypsy Rroma, but also families of tinkers and peddlers, Jews, Central Asian nomads, displaced aboriginal tribes and others. This quiet spread around the world has made it possible for the tribe to keep a respectable number of lupus members in the line. While there are few Kinfolk wolves in any one place, it keeps the breed safe from localized catastrophes (human or natural).

In short, Strider blood can turn up in the oddest places. The restless tendencies of the tribe trickle down to their Kinfolk, fortunately or unfortunately, so the Striders cannot often turn to their Kin for political or monetary help. Family understands like no one else can, though, and sometimes that's all a lonely werewolf needs.

Mentor

Dedicated mentors are sometimes in short supply, for a number of reasons. Even Strider elders have a hard time settling down. Where the Garou of other tribes prefer to warm their aching joints beside a bawn bonfire, a Strider would probably rather hobble along

a dusty road until his old bones loosen up. And while any road-dusted Strider is proud of her store of knowledge and would be pleased to share her secrets with a young tribemate, she probably also feels that experience is the best teacher. This should not discourage a cub from trying to glean all the survival tips he can from his elders — he just shouldn't expect even those fondest of him to be around very often. Rather than having a mentor in residence at his caern, that cub might have two or three wandering mentors who drop in twice a year to check up on him and show him a few new tricks.

Young Silent Striders also mentor with elders of other tribes a bit more often than traditionally is common among the Garou. These elders may be willing to undertake the responsibility as a favor to a Strider of their acquaintance, or perhaps in anticipation of having a top-notch go-between at their beck and call.

Pure Breed

Pure Breed is relatively rare among the Silent Striders, since they have for so many years been scattered to the winds and denied their homeland. Pure breeding is especially treasured by those who seek to free or find the Strider ancestors — they worry how the ancestors will recognize their children after so many years if the bloodline is not preserved. Others, like the Dispossessed, worry more about finding a homeland elsewhere or look ahead to the Apocalypse, and care little if at all about such matters.

The appearance of purebred Silent Striders is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Resources

Silent Striders may not take the Resources Background. They have been on the move since they were forced out of Egypt thousands of years ago, never stopping long enough to put down roots. Without those roots, the tribe (and to a lesser extent, much of its Kinfolk) can't hold on to assets. Even something like a car or motorcycle, which might seem vital to rapid transport in the modern world, will have to be left behind at some point, and it's not always going to be there when the Strider gets back to where she left it. Travel light, and learn how to hot-wire a car.

Rites

A well-rounded Silent Strider knows a good number of rites, and even prospective Strider cubs are taught a few common rites before the Rite of Passage. After all, if the tribe expects them to do fairly well fending for themselves, it's best to give them the tools to do so.

Striders are also generally willing to teach rites to members of other tribes — but only rites that they consider to be the common property of the Garou, not rites that were given to the Silent Striders alone (like Descent into the Dark Umbra). While another tribe's Galliard in a small rural sept might balk at teaching others the Gathering for the Departed so that she can keep the job of mourning heroes all to herself, the traveling Strider will certainly have a broader worldview. He certainly might also have some strong ideas on how difficult it is to share such small but vital information once you're dead.

Totem

The totems of the Garou share the other tribes' ambivalence about the Silent Striders: Because they have no land to call home and often take a seemingly subservient role in Garou society, totems of respect treat the Striders coolly. Because they often choose to run rather than stand and fight, totems of war hold them in suspicion. Packs of young Striders may find they are best treated by totems of cunning, while Striders who have been around the block a few times often find the reception they deserve from totems of wisdom. These are broad generalizations, of course. In particular, the totems detailed later in this chapter have a history with the tribe and strike alliances with the Striders readily.

Because Striders tend to spend so much time outside the traditional pack structure, it is not uncommon for them to strike bargains with individual spirits, taking a familiar spirit on as sort of a personal totem. A werewolf with a powerful and headstrong spirit ally might find it even more difficult than usual to meld himself into a pack's structure — deals of this nature are best entered into with some foresight.

Camps and Backgrounds

Seekers

The Seekers know more mystic rites than any other camp of Silent Striders (with the potential exception of the Eaters of the Dead, a possibility simply not discussed among the tribe). They are also quite likely to have a sack full of fetishes and talens found in dark corners and out-of-the-way places. They often serve as mentors to young Striders, and many keep in touch with their own mentors from their youth.

Harbingers

Harbingers know the value of allies and cultivate them whenever and wherever they can. Kinfolk are valued by this camp as well — not only are some spurred to join the Harbingers to protect caerns and the Kin who so often live nearby, but a network of Kinfolk is essential to provide support during a

Harbinger's extensive and often erratic travels. Individuals with Pure Breed are welcomed to the camp with open arms, since the Garou of other tribes cannot help but pay closer attention to the warnings they bear.

Dispossessed

Members of the Dispossessed camp work to maintain allies and contacts within other Garou tribes or local political structures — anyone that can help them get a foot in the door. They are also drawn to packs with strong totem bonds; such bonds provide a sense of belonging that many of the Dispossessed crave.

Wayfarers

A Wayfarer can keep a Rolodex full of contacts in his head — it's how he makes a living. Like all Striders they don't have much in the way of money, but you can spot a Wayfarer who's good at his job by the number of fetishes he carries, all payment for services rendered. They carry a wealth of information in their heads, too, much of it in the form of rites — which they'd be happy to teach you, for a price.

Swords of Night

The Swords of Night are possibly even more practical than the Wayfarers — it's just that all that practicality is aimed at one goal: killing vampires. Fetishes, especially d'siah, are treasured. Warlike totems are preferred, for both aid in battle and the company of kindred spirits. Lastly, Kinfolk have been vital to this group, supporting the camp through centuries of secret struggle and often fighting by the side of the Garou.

Naming Conventions and Appearance

Egyptologists have disagreed since the earliest days of the discipline about Anubis, the guardian of the dead — specifically, is his form meant to be that of a jackal, or simply a large dog with perked-up ears? The argument would come to a dead stop if a Silent Strider in her war form dropped in on a conference of academics: without a doubt, the early humankind's depiction of the god Anubis was modeled on the Striders. Unfortunately for academe (or perhaps quite fortunately), this is terribly unlikely to happen. In fact, Striders often find they must avoid those who share their interest in Egypt's history. The more perceptive scholars might puzzle out their footloose friend's secret, and any glimpse of that distinctive "jackal-headed" form would be unforgettable; neither the Striders nor the Garou of other tribes are willing to risk such a wide breach of the Veil. In theory, the Striders keep their relationships with Egyptologists cordial and brief. In practice, who can keep track of them?

The resemblance to Anubis (more properly vice versa) is most pronounced in those with high levels of Pure Breed. In Lupus they are long and lean, with thick cords of musculature showing clearly beneath a short, sleek coat of ink black fur. Some sport a coarser mane of fur down the back of the neck, but they lack the protective ruff of fur covering the neck that makes surrendering by showing the throat a less nerve-wracking proposition for other Garou. Some Striders take advantage of the Egyptian style of pectoral jewelry to wear heavy collars to cover that vulnerable area.

In individuals who are neither particularly strong nor hale, the bones of the ribcage may be clearly visible. In Hispo, shoulders and haunches broaden — this is a form meant for fighting, not running over any distance. The neck and jaw also widen to accommodate the massive teeth and muscles that enable this form's deadly bite. In Crinos, the Striders often tower over members of other tribes, but while their shoulders are straight and broad, the rest of the body remains lithe (or just plain thin), built more for grace than power. Glabro and Homid forms are very clearly Semitic or Nubian, and the body type keeps the lean and slender tendencies of the Lupus form.

With more distance from the pure blood, Homid form might appear as practically any ethnic group, though admittedly the majority of Striders descend from Middle Eastern or African Kin. A blond-haired, blue-eyed Strider will take some guff from her tribemates — some of it in fun, some not. The Strider's coat in furred forms grows coarser and longer the less Pure Breed she has; a Strider with no Pure Breed at all might look like an ordinary wolf with a black or even simply dark gray coat.

Practically every Silent Strider sports an Egyptian name. The name, known as a Remembrance Name, is taken after the Rite of Passage to pay homage to lost ancestors and to retain a link with their homeland, four thousand years after the tribe was forced from the banks of the Nile. Today, the only Striders that purposefully shun the Egyptian naming tradition belong to the Dispossessed camp, who send a very clear message to their tribemates by doing so.

Silent Striders adopt deed names as well — or have a name thrust upon them by general acclaim. While some Striders are known by both names, others may prefer to use one on a daily basis and reserve the other for ceremonial use. Any combination of these practices is acceptable.

The Practical Side

Garou are creatures of tradition. As some Silent Striders began to put their past behind them, choosing to embrace the naming traditions of new groups of Kinfolk or simply use the deed names that werewolves have been fond of since the beginning of time, they noticed something odd about how they were treated by their fellows. Scouting missions, long-distance Umbral quests, even the simplest message duties went most often to Silent Striders who maintained Egyptian ways (or a convincing facsimile thereof). The upstart Striders were seen as flighty, untrustworthy — or they were simply not what others expected. Even the Warders of Men, as the Glass Walkers were once called, innovators and revolutionaries among werewolves, preferred to conduct business with Striders who sported pharaoh's beards and linen kilts. Many of these newer Striders came from Rroma families; history repeated itself as gypsies once again took up the pretense of Egyptian heritage to smooth their way.

Remembrance names are chosen with care. Some names are simply never taken (see Chapter Two, p. 41, for a full accounting of those). As a more prosaic concern, some venerable Egyptian names like Smenkhkare and Horemheb don't roll off the tongue. The deed name can change as the Garou surpasses his own exploits, but once a Strider picks an Egyptian name, he's pretty much stuck with it for life. It's his professional name among the Garou, and the name the spirits know for him; should Smenkhkare decide that he'd rather be a little less exotic, he'll undoubtedly lose Renown if he makes a change.

Gifts

The Silent Striders have over many years sought out spirit teachers to learn Gifts that help them not only survive on the margins of Garou society, but also succeed admirably in their chosen roles, whether as messengers, hunters of lost lore, stealthy warriors, or heralds of doom. Garou of other tribes can learn the Strider's tribal Gifts, but camp Gifts are held as close secrets by their members.

Tribal Gifts

• **Heavens' Guidance (Level One)** — A Strider with this Gift is never lost while the stars shine in the sky. This Gift is taught by a spirit servant of the North Star.

System: Once learned, this Gift's effects are always active from twilight to dawn. The werewolf gains an innate sense of direction; he always knows which way is north, and the path he took to reach where he is.

MET: The effects are automatic from sunset to sunrise.

• **Tireless Running (Level One)** — Young Silent Striders quickly learn the need for extraordinary speed and stamina — often the messages that even untested youths are asked to carry cannot wait for the message bearer to sleep or eat. A Garou with this Gift can run from moonrise to moonrise subsisting on nothing more than her spiritual energy, crossing almost four hundred miles, but as soon as she breaks her run she must eat and rest. This Gift is taught by a wolf-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The character (who must be in Lupus form) may long run for twenty-four hours without the player making a Stamina roll. After twenty-four hours, and each twenty-four hour period thereafter, the player must spend one point of Gnosis and one point of Willpower to allow the character to continue running; otherwise, she must stop. Whenever the character stops running, for whatever reason, she suffers -2 dice to all pools until she has a chance to eat and rest, unless she has run a number of hours that is less than her Stamina.

MET: Expend one Gnosis trait, and the character may run for 24 hours without any static Physical tests to do so. Further running requires an additional Gnosis and Willpower trait for every 24 hours. When the character does stop running he gains two Negative Physical Traits, *Exhausted.*

• **Tread Sebek's Back (Level Two)** — When activating this Gift, the Garou calls upon the spirit of Sebek the crocodile to bear her up as she runs across the water. The werewolf can also run across other liquids (a vat of industrial cleaner, sewage, or even lava), but this Gift provides no protection for her feet — any damage is greatly lessened as the harmful substance only comes into contact with a small part of her body, but she must soak it nonetheless. Particularly fast and spiritually attuned Silent Striders claim to have run across seas using this Gift. It is taught by a crocodile-spirit, or that of a crocodile bird.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Dexterity + Survival (difficulty 7). Each success allows the character to travel across water as if it were open ground for an hour. In areas inhabited by crocodiles, the difficulty to invoke this Gift drops to 5.

MET: Spend a Gnosis trait and make a static Physical test (*Survival* allows a retest). Success allows the character to travel across water as if it were dry land for one scene. It is recommended that the player find an alternate means of transit to simulate his character's movement over water.

• **Scale of Ma'at (Level Three)** — The Halls of Ma'at are where the dead go to be judged; the liars, cheaters and murders are denied eternal life. The Silent Striders can invoke the judgment of Ma'at on the living, seeing through lies to find the ugly truth beneath. This Gift is taught by an ibis-spirit, the symbol of Thoth.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Empathy (difficulty of the subject's Manipulation + Subterfuge). Success indicates that the character knows which of the subject's statements are true, and which are false. If the character chooses to delve more deeply into any statement, true or false, the player must first succeed at a Perception + Empathy roll against the same difficulty. Success unveils the complete truth to the Garou; a botch ends this use of the Gift, and closes this topic to the Strider forever — at least when questioning this individual.

MET: Make a Social test against the target (*Empathy* allows a retest by the Garou using this Gift and *Subterfuge* allows a retest by the target). Success indicates that the character knows which of the target's statements are true and which are false. Attempting to question the target (rather than just listening to him) requires a second Social test.

• **Dam the Heartflood (Level Four)** — No other tribe among the Garou has as much hatred for vampires, for as just a cause, as the Silent Striders. It is no surprise then that the Striders sought out this Gift, searching long through the spirit world and the physical world for the secret to incapacitating a vampire. They found an answer from the spirit children of Cobra, who taught them a spirit-poison usable against the vampires who defiled Cobra's name.

System: This Gift can only be used on supernatural creatures that use a blood pool to power their abilities (vampires, ghouls and the spider shapechanger Ananasi). The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Medicine (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Each success renders the target unable to tap the power of her blood for one turn — she may not use any blood-related powers or spend blood points to heal wounds, activate Disciplines or Gifts, or for any other reason. A Garou may only use this Gift once per scene per target, but multiple werewolves can envenom the same target.

MET: This Gift can only be used on characters with Blood Traits. Expend one Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge. If the Garou wins, the target cannot use any Blood Traits for one turn per Mental Trait that the Garou expended during the challenge. This Gift can only be used by the Garou once per scene per target, although multiple Garou could use it on the same target.

Camp Gifts

Silent Striders may learn these Gifts if they hear about them from a camp member or deduce their existence from observation, but the spirits that teach these Gifts will not share them with Garou of other tribes.

Harbingers

• **Grim Resolve (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Inspiration. The Harbingers learn to strengthen the willpower of their allies not through inspired leadership, but by a contagious determination to spit in Death's face.

• **Ghost Touched (Level Three)** — Once a Garou steps into the Dark Umbra, he carries an aura of death and decay with him always. The aura is difficult to see, but it is there nonetheless — the perceptive might smell a faint must in his fur, or catch strange reflections in the pupils of his eyes. This Gift harnesses that deathly aura, weaving it into a protective shield against the attacks or special abilities of ghosts. This Gift is taught by the denizens of the Dark Umbra, and is not easily come by.

System: Once learned, this Gift is always in effect; no roll need be made. The difficulties of all rolls made by ghosts (wraiths or spectres, if you're also using Wraith: The Oblivion) to affect the character are made at +2 difficulty (maximum 10). This includes effects that would be beneficial. Using the energies of the Dark Umbra in this way reinforces the impression of death that others may feel, which will increase the difficulty on Social rolls when the Storyteller feels it to be appropriate.

MET: After the character learns this Gift, the character wins all ties against ghosts who attempt to use their magical abilities on him. However, a ghost that wishes to use a beneficial ability on him must succeed at a static Mental test.

Seekers

• **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Ragabash Gift.

Dispossessed

• **Graceful Strike (Level Two)** — This Gift was used in bygone days to assassinate corrupt officials or merchants who were the tools of vampires. Beautiful young Garou would dance for them, then strike when the target least suspected. The secrets of the dancer's knife had been kept alive by members of the Dispossessed camp, who found it useful to play on their gypsy heritage. In these desperate times, it's a common tool of the camp's Galliards when a fight gets messy. This Gift is taught by a cobra-spirit.

System: The player spends one point of Gnosis before making an attack roll as usual (Dexterity + Melee, difficulty dictated by the weapon), though the character's attack is unusually fluid and dance-like. If the attack is successful, the player adds the character's Performance skill rating in dice to the damage roll.

MET: The character must have the Performance ability. Expend one Gnosis trait and declare Graceful Strike to be active. The character's next attack, if successful, does an additional health level of damage.

Swords of Night

• **Mindblock (Level Four)** — As the Silver Fang Gift. The Swords of Night are well aware that the most dangerous aspect of the vampire is its ability to influence one's mind, and have made many sacrifices to be taught this Gift.

Wayfarers

• **Call to Duty (Level Two)** — As the Philodox Gift. Wayfarers are quite prone to negotiating terms with spirits, as well as asking for the names of particular spirits as payment for their services.

Eaters of the Dead

• **Touch of Death (Level Four)** — The Garou can inflict visions of death upon an unsuspecting opponent. Worse, these visions are highly personal premonitions of the opponent's untimely demise, as if someone "had walked over his grave." The fear this creates is paralyzing; in the worst cases, the victim falls catatonic and cannot be revived for days. On recovery, the stricken individual cannot remember details of what so terrified him, simply that involved his death. Victims who survive the encounter with the Eater of the Dead are forever marked with a white lock or patch of hair. This Gift is taught by a death-spirit.

System: The Garou must touch her victim; the player rolls Dexterity + Brawl if in combat, Dexterity + Stealth if sneaking up unnoticed, or Manipulation + Subterfuge if casually touching him in the course of conversation. On success, the player spends two points of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). If the Eater of the Dead achieves more successes than the target has Willpower, the victim becomes catatonic with fear. If the successes are fewer than the target's Willpower, the target suffers a -1 penalty to all dice pools for each success due to the debilitating fear. In both cases, the successes are eliminated at a rate of one per day — a catatonic victim does not awaken until all of the initial successes are eliminated.

MET: The character must touch her victim by succeeding in a Physical test as though making a normal attack (in a noncombat situation, simply declare "I touch you," remembering the no touching rule, or make a Social test if the target is wary). If the Garou successfully touches her target, she should spend two Gnosis Traits and make a Social test against the target. If the Garou succeeds, the target becomes catatonic with fear for one day. On a tie, the target loses all ties on all tests until the next moonrise.

Bitter Hex

• **Curse of Hatred (Level Two)** — As the metis Gift.

• **Fetish Doll (Level Five)** — As the Uktena Gift.

Learning Gifts Taught by Ancestor-Spirits

The Silent Striders are caught in a dilemma when it comes to Gifts that members of other tribes learn from the spirits of their ancestors. They have several options: The first is simple — do without. For those who find that unacceptable, the second method is to learn the Gift from another Garou, at a greater cost in time and effort (and the cost of an additional experience point to boot). Third, the character might importune the ancestor-spirit of another tribe to teach him; this effort would be strengthened by the assistance of a Theurge from the chosen tribe, but the would-be student can expect the spirit to require an extravagant chiminage gift, if it will agree at all. And lastly, the Strider could plead with Owl, who flies into the Dark Umbra in search of lost knowledge, to seek out and bring back the Gift for him. As in the previous case, Owl would expect a great service or gift in return for the dangerous mission, but the totem might agree more readily if she feels it is in the best interest of the tribe.

Rites

Rites of Accord

Rite of the Midwife

Level One

This rite is taught as a rite of accord because it is enacted to protect a newborn from harm or taint by hurrying or delaying its birth. The unsullied focus necessary for this rite is an owl's feather, as Owl intercedes on the mother's behalf. The mother must ordinarily be a Silent Strider or one of their Kinfolk, though Owl may be convinced with proper chiminage to intercede on the behalf of Garou or Kinfolk of other tribes, or even a normal human woman. The rite may be performed for several days in a row to achieve the necessary result — in fact, it may be necessary to do so. This rite is often considered the province of female Striders, though most are willing to teach it to any male Strider who wishes to learn.

System: The "midwife" and the mother must first decide whether they will try to hurry the delivery of the child or delay it. Then the ritemaster's player must spend one point of Gnosis and roll Charisma + Rituals (target 7). Simple success delays or hastens the birth by one day. If the rite is begun at the onset of labor, it ceases immediately and will not begin again for a full day — in all other cases it is difficult to be sure if the rite was effective at all. It may require several days of ritual to bring a child into the world early; usually it is considered preferable to delay the birth unless a healer is sure the child is viable, or the mother is headed into great danger.

MET: As described above. The ritemaster must spend one Gnosis Trait and make a static Social test (difficulty 7 Traits). Success delays or hastens the birth by one day (the ritemaster's choice to delay or hasten).

Caern Rites

Gathering of Wanderers

Level Two

Even though the Silent Striders hold caerns in the far-flung places of the world, the tribe must occasionally meet in the bare wilderness, far from any wellspring of Gaia's power. The Garou present take their places in the circle as they would around the heart of a caern. As their howls reverberate, a silent call races through the Umbra, summoning an Engling into the circle to sanctify the proceedings. The Striders say that the location of one vagabond moot, where great deeds were done and great stories told, was later successfully opened as a caern by another tribe.

System: The player whose character leads the rite must roll Wits + Enigmas (target 7). If successful, the Engling arrives at the center of the circle within the hour. The leader of the rite must give the Engling a point of Gnosis; also, each Garou who wishes to bring a matter before the moot must also donate a point of Gnosis. When the moot is over, the Engling returns to the Umbra without having been hunted..

MET: The leader of the rite must make a static Mental test (difficulty of 7 Traits). If he succeeds, the Engling arrives at the center of the circle within the hour, at which point the leader of the rite must sacrifice one Gnosis Trait to the Engling, as must each Garou who wishes to bring a matter before the moot.

Rites of Death

Rite of Purification

Level Two

This is a burial ritual to honor the dead that is only performed by Silent Striders for their fallen tribemates, only in the company of other Striders. If there are members of other tribes who wish to mourn, a Gathering for the Departed will be held at another time and place.

System: The body of the deceased must first be washed (the Rite of Cleansing may be necessary if the werewolf died fighting minions of the Wyrm). After the body is laid out, the Master of the Rite invokes Scarab, who sends beetle-spirits from her brood to strip the hair, skin and flesh from the body (the player rolls Charisma + Rituals, target of 8 minus the Rank of the honored Strider). When only bones remain, the spirits depart, and the bones are placed in a small grave, preferably at a caern. Other times the bones are laid to rest in some place significant to the departed, or simply by the roadside. This is no dishonor among the Striders — it is the reality of a wanderer's life. Better to bury the bones when there is time, than die carrying them and so leave two unburied.

MET: As described above. The ritemaster should make a static Social test (difficulty of 8 Traits less the subject's Rank).

Rite for the Watchful

Level Four

This rite is not concerned with tracing a Garou's heritage — that is a matter for Galliard songs. Rather, this rite deals with the more practical matter of which of those ancestors take sufficient interest in the doings of their descendant to watch over her and lend her aid in times of need (in other words, what spirits the werewolf can channel using her Ancestors Background). It may be considered strange that a tribe cut off from its ancestors would know this rite, but they were not always thus deprived. They have preserved the rite through the many years of their homeless travels, often bartering the knowledge provided by the

rite for passage on moon bridges or access to caerns. An unexpected benefit of maintaining the rite has become clear: it can be used to discover which Strider cubs have the ability to call on the lost ancestor-spirits, or who have the potential to do so in the future.

System: The ritemaster pulls on the nebulous energy of the Dark Umbra to reveal the faint traces left on the Garou's spirit by her ancestors. The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (target 8). For each success, he learns the deed name of an interested ancestor-spirit and its relationship with the Garou.

MET: Make a static Social test (difficulty of 8 Traits). If the character succeeds, he learns the deed name of an interested ancestor spirit and its relationship with the Garou.

Mystic Rites

Rite of the Spoken Page

Level Two

The Garou seldom write things down, and the Silent Striders commit words to paper even less frequently. Humans write all the time, however — and so do some other supernatural beings. This rite summons an ibis-spirit and sets it to reading the designated manuscript (or sarcophagus, or hand-written notebook) aloud. It has practical uses beyond simple hands-free reading: it has been used to "read" many books at once, listening for a key word or phrase; to learn to read a language the Garou can only speak; or to simply decipher criminally bad handwriting. Curiously, if the writing is less than one month old, enough of the author remains with the message that the ibis-spirit reads it in the author's voice.

System: The player makes a Wits + Rituals roll (target 7). If successful, the ibis-spirit arrives and begins reading, and will continue for one hour per success or until dismissed. The spirit reads aloud in the language written — it does not translate the material. If the message is less than one month old, the hearers may attempt to identify the voice of the author (which may require an Intelligence roll), or even make guesses as to the meaning behind the author's words as if she were there in person (requiring a Perception + Empathy roll).

MET: Make a static Mental test (difficulty 7 traits). If successful, the ibis-spirit arrives and begins reading, and will continue until the next moonrise or until dismissed. A static Mental test may allow the hearers to identify the voice of the author or guess as to the author's secret meanings, as described above.

Descent into the Underworld

Level Three

Most Garou think of the Umbra, the Gaian spirit world, as the only spirit realm that sits close to the physical world. Most Garou are wrong. The Underworld — the Land of the Dead, the Dark Umbra — sits astride the physical realm just as the Umbra does. Within it lie the ghosts of thousands of humans who died unable to let go of some aspect of their mortal lives.

These days, the Underworld is a tremendously dangerous place. A few years ago a cataclysm set off a series of hellish storms that still threaten to rip the lands of the dead apart. The ghosts are more desperate these days, and the storms that rage outside the cities of the dead can harm even the doughtiest Silent Strider warrior.

Owl accompanies the Garou into the Underworld, but few other traditional totems do the same.

System: This rite takes five minutes to perform. The character must sacrifice a living mammal and touch every character to be affected by the rite with at least a fingerprint of its blood. He then draws sigils in the ground nearby with the remaining blood. The player should roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 7). Success on this roll takes the ritemaster to the Underworld. Each additional success takes one of the other characters marked (in the event that the character does not achieve as many successes as the rite has subjects, those with he highest Gnosis go through first).

The Underworld is a dark and storm-tossed realm whose inhabitants feed on the strong emotions of the living. Storytellers who wish to go with further detail are advised to check out **Wraith: the Oblivion** and its final supplement **Ends of Empire.**

MET: The rite functions as described; the character must succeed in a static Mental Test (difficulty of 7 Traits), and may bring his pack along with him.

Punishment Rites

Rite of the Jackdaw

Silent Striders fortunate enough to parent children sometimes jokingly refer to this rite as the Rite of the Toddler. The Rite of the Jackdaw is used to punish those Garou who have broken a promise of secrecy. It causes the subject to uncontrollably tell everyone he meets about the most private and trivial matters of his life. This ritual will not cause the subject to reveal other secrets he's been sworn to keep, but it will almost certainly cause him to reveal personal information that embarrasses only him.

This rite can be rather humiliating, and many Garou who are subject to it find themselves overcome by Rage at their embarrassment. It is considered the height of dishonor to take retribution against a Garou who has used this ritual in a just fashion. Subjects who

wish to avoid the rite's effects simply abandon all contact with others for a few days, which is considered to be an acceptable response.

System: This rite takes ten minutes to perform. The ritemaster symbolically carves a number of open-mouth sigils into bits of wood and distributes them ritualistically around the subject of the rite (who must remain more or less still during the rite, though he doesn't necessarily have to be willing). The ritemaster rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7). For each success, the target suffers for one day from the effects described above. The target can expend Willpower to avoid stating some particularly odious personal secret, but Willpower so expended does not return until the rite's duration has expired.

MET: The ritemaster makes a static Social test (difficulty of 7 Traits). The rite lasts for one day and otherwise functions as described above.

Minor Rites

Rite of Meeting and Parting

Two Striders meeting on the road is a rare occurrence, but often a pleasant one. Even if one or both are traveling on missions of desperate importance or even certain doom, at least for a short time neither has to travel alone. Each traveler greets the other with a traditional salutation in his or her native tongue. If time permits, they share food and water, and exchange news of their travels. On parting, they exchange blessings in the Garou tongue; the most common is "Gaia soft beneath your feet, Luna's light on your path." Even in emergencies, two Striders who recognize each other will howl out as much of the greeting and farewell as they can as they pass each other at a full sprint.

This rite is not usually performed on arrival at a caern, but Silent Strider caerns often have their own rituals to welcome travelers.

Camp Rites

Seekers

Ritual of Life (Mystic)

Level Five

The Seekers have rediscovered one of the greatest secrets of ancient Egypt — the ritual that brings life back to the dead. Because of Sutekh's curse on the tribe, a Seeker wishing to bring one of his tribemates back from the dead must act quickly (the rite must begin before the body cools, as a guideline), before the spirit is irretrievably lost. This ritual has not yet been performed on a Garou from another tribe since its rediscovery, but Seekers theorize that any complete body will do. This ritual is not without cost to its dead subject: Nothing that has died may dwell in the land of the living. The re-vivified werewolf must enter the Umbra (or the Dark Umbra), never to return to the physical world. Eventually, the Garou will disconnect and become a spirit-like creature. The Seekers argue amongst themselves about the ritual's possible effects on normal humans, and even on vampires, but for now they are proceeding with further research, and extreme caution.

System: In a lengthy ritual abundant with Egyptian symbology and ceremonial tools, the ritemaster and his assistants repair, clean the body inside and out and embalm it. The player rolls Intelligence + Rituals against a difficulty of 10 for Silent Striders (reflecting the hurry with which the ritual must be performed), or 8 for Garou; other beings may be harder or easier to call back from the dead. Success indicates that the spirit returns to the body, and that the revived Garou must immediately step sideways into the Umbra. If the revived Garou enters the physical world again, he immediately loses three health levels per turn until he returns to the Umbra or dies; this damage is aggravated. Failure indicates either a mistake by the ritemaster, or that the spirit simply refuses to return. The results of a botch are left entirely to the Storyteller, who should feel free wreak all kinds of havoc on those who mess with the powers of life and death.

MET: The character must succeed at a static Mental test (difficulty of 10 traits for Silent Striders or 8 for any other Garou). Success indicates that the spirit returns to the body; the revived Garou must immediately step sideways into the Umbra.

Eaters of the Dead

Rite of Dormant Wisdom (Mystic)

Level Four

This rite is forbidden. Its very existence is denied outside the tribe, for the Silent Striders believe that the other Garou would turn on all of them if it were discovered that even one camp among them practice this ritual. In truth, most Striders do not know that it exists, or believe that it is only a myth. The Rite of Dormant Wisdom is only taught to trusted and experienced members of the Eaters of the Dead camp.

The ritemaster and his fellow cultists use the Rite of Dormant Wisdom to gain the secrets and memories of the dead by ritually devouring the dead person's brain. The ritual will function properly so long as the brain is intact, regardless of the length of time since the subject's death. Each participant is likely to get a different kind of memory from the subject – for instance, one might get

the subject's memories of love, another his memories of voices and sound, and a third the subject's darkest secrets. The Storyteller can vary this thematically based on the participants and the nature of the rite's subject.

The Wyrm has its tentacles all over this rite; cannibalism of any sort is expressly forbidden by the Litany. Each use of the ritual brings the character a step closer to the service of Foebok, Urge Wyrm of Fear.

System: All those participating in the ritual must roll Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9). Those who succeed gain some small portion of the dead one's memories and secret knowledge. A participant who gets just one success will get the most recent memories of the deceased, while one who gets five successes will learn the broad range of the subject's life, including many of his most treasured secrets.

No participant can gain game abilities (Knowledges, Disciplines, Gifts, Rites, etc) directly from the use of this ritual, but at the Storyteller's discretion the rite can be used to justify the expenditure of experience points on game abilities that the rite's subject knew.

As described elsewhere, the Wyrm's touch is on this rite. By default, any Garou who takes part in the Rite of Dormant Wisdom a number of times greater than the Garou's permanent Gnosis trait will become a slave of Foebok. However, Storytellers are encouraged to change this mechanic to make the Garou's safety zone less predictable and stimulate roleplay among the troupe.

This ritual will work on the corpses of supernatural creatures (such as Garou and immortals) if the participants expend a permanent point of Gnosis. It will also work on vampires, already corpses, if the vampire is unconscious and immobilized. Using this rite on a vampire destroys it. More than five successes are needed to absorb the full life experience of a creature that has lived longer than two centuries.

MET: Those participating in the rite must succeed in static Mental challenges (difficulty of 9 traits). All participants gain different kinds of knowledge, as described above; the rite master should gain more information than the other participants but otherwise the depth and breadth of the knowledge gained comes at the Storyteller's description.

Participants risk the attention of the Urge Wyrm Foebok, as described above (substituting the character's Gnosis Traits for permanent Gnosis).

Fetishes

Wanderer's Friend

Level 1, Gnosis 4

The Silent Striders have an image to maintain — that of the unflappable traveler, never lost, and never at a loss for which way to go. With expectations so high, the first step of that first journey can be a doozy. This fetish is often gifted to a young Strider by a mentor after she undergoes her Rite of Passage, as a way of smoothing the road.

At first glance, the fetish appears to be a normal compass. A closer look reveals glyphs on the compass face, and a second needle floating from the center point. When the owner is holding the compass as she gets directions to her destination (and the compass has been successfully activated), the spirit of magnetism housed within hears and remembers the directions. As the Strider travels, the two needles remain together until the owner reaches a landmark or crossroads given in the directions; at that point, the second needle swings to show the next direction. The compass understands every language spoken by the Garou who created the fetish (and thus it might understand a language that its owner does not), and it is even capable of interpreting pantomimed directions with reasonable accuracy. The compass is entirely dependent on the directions received, however, and the directions might always be plain wrong.

Elders grumble that some youths enamored with technology have duplicated this fetish's functionality with a GPS receiver and an electricity elemental. The warm patina of a compass handed down for generations from mentor to student cannot be duplicated, of course. Since these fetishes are usually of use only to the newest members of the tribe, an elder seen in possession of one that isn't immediately handed to a cub will be ribbed endlessly and given unbecoming nicknames. Most Striders make it a point to hand their wanderer's compasses off by Rank Two, or Three at the latest. This also helps ensure in small measure that the tribe's active wanderers take some interest in helping new arrivals.

MET: Level One, Gnosis 4. There are no game mechanics that govern the use of this fetish, and it functions as described above.

Stone-Headed Mace

Level Two, Gnosis 5

These ancient weapons were easy for human hands to craft — a hole was laboriously drilled through a large rock, and a strong wooden haft was inserted. These simple materials were also appealing to spirits allied with the Garou, particularly spirits of nature or the element of earth. Once the weapon was embellished with gold wire and carved with Garou and Egyptian glyphs, a spirit was usually willing to inhabit the fetish and lend it power. When wielded by a Homid-form Garou, a stone-headed mace does Strength + 1 bashing

damage. When the wielder changes to Glabro, the mace increases proportionally, and inflicts Strength + 2 bashing damage. When the wielder assumes Crinos form, the mace grows again (resembling a small boulder on a tree trunk), at this size inflicting Strength + 3 bashing damage.

Since these weapons are relatively simple to make, they are still common. Even nature spirits and earth elementals are more jaded in modern times, however, and it may take particularly skillful or precious ornamentation to convince a spirit that the mace is a suitable home.

MET: Level Two, Gnosis 5. The Stone-Headed Mace functions much as a Club (see **Laws of the Wild**, p. 196), except that it does two Health Levels of damage in Homid form, three in Glabro, and four in Crinos.

D'siah

Level Three, Gnosis 6

The d'siah is a knife with a flint blade curved like a crescent moon. The blade is usually eight to nine inches long and roughly two inches wide. It is primarily used in a slashing motion — while the outer edge is wickedly sharp, the inner edge may be sharpened only near the upswept point, or not at all, depending on the skill of the craftsman. When the inside edge is sharp, the trailing point can be used to thrust at the end of the slashing arc as a return stroke. In truly desperate straits, the lower, mostly decorative point close to the grip can be used to stab an opponent while in a clinch. Because this knife takes skill and training to use properly, the difficulty to attack with it is 7. It inflicts Strength damage. The war spirit bound into the blade, usually one of Cobra's brood, is somewhat more discerning than spirits usually bound to klaives — a d'siah does aggravated damage only to Wyrm-tainted creatures (use the same guidelines as the Gift: Sense Wyrm) and any type of spirit.

In addition, after a successful strike, the Strider can activate the d'siah to drain a point of Gnosis from her opponent (or a point of Essence from spirits). Because this requires a Gnosis roll, the werewolf cannot use this ability of the knife on the same turn she spends Rage for extra actions.

The greatest strength of the d'siah is directed against the Striders' greatest foes: Egypt's vampires and their snake-like minions. The cobra-spirit in the blade lashes out violently against its tainted reflections, inflicting Strength +3 aggravated damage.

Every d'siah is a fetish weapon — flint is sharp, but a blade of this length would invariably snap if subjected to the twists and jars of combat without a spirit to keep it whole. Even with the spirit's assistance, a d'siah may break if used in combat against foes wearing armor. If the wielder's player botches an

attack roll against an armored opponent, the player must roll the blade's Gnosis rating against a target of 6. The blade snaps if the roll fails. The flint blade of a d'siah cannot be repaired; the character must find another knife, or craft one by painstakingly knapping the blade, preferably from Egyptian flint. The skill to form such a long and curved blade was rare even in early times; much of the art was lost long ago when bronze became common. Today, Silent Strider Kinfolk, archeologists and survival hobbyists keep the skill from dying out completely, but the d'siah has become rarer with every generation. Many Striders instead carry a jambiya (see below), the metal descendent of the crescent blade, which can take considerably more punishment.

MET: Level Three, Gnosis 6. It grants two extra traits in combat, but only does Strength damage. A d'siah does aggravated damage to Wyrm-tainted creatures. However, when facing vampires and their snake-like minions, the d'siah adds an additional damage level (and does aggravated damage).

The wielder of a d'siah can use it to destroy one of its opponent's Gnosis (or Essence) traits. After hitting, the character must make a Gnosis Test against his foe; if successful, the opponent loses one Gnosis. The Garou who wields the d'siah loses nothing if he fails this test.

The d'siah has the Negative Trait "Breakable," which can be bid against it by an armored opponent. If the character loses a combat challenge in which Breakable has been bid, the character must immediately make a Simple Test against the opponent. If the character loses this test, the d'siah breaks.

Jambiya

Level Three, Gnosis 5

The fetish jambiya is most often a klaive forged in a form that pays homage to the Silent Strider heritage. The blade of a jambiya is curved, but it lacks the bottom point that would form the full crescent. Both edges of the blade are sharpened. Like the d'siah, it is typically used to slash with the outer edge, but the upswept point can be used to cut into the opponent with a backwards stroke. A fetish jambiya is forged from pure silver, and in larger proportions than ever created for a human wielder — roughly four inches wide at its broadest, and about eighteen inches long, though it loses some of its reach to the curve of the blade. The knife is heavy in Homid form, but a wielder with a Strength of 2 and 1 point in Melee can handle it with one hand.

Because of the relatively short reach of the weapon and the skill required to wield it effectively, the difficulty to hit with a jambiya is 7. A successful strike with the fetish does Strength aggravated damage. Because of the large quantities of silver used to make the blade, the wielder's effective Gnosis rating is reduced by one while she carries the knife.

MET: Level Three, Gnosis 5. The jambiya is silver, and so costs its wielder one Gnosis trait while being wielded. It grants its wielder two extra traits in combat; it does Strength damage, aggravated.

Owl Talon D'siah

Level Five, Gnosis 7

Only two of these ancient flint blades are known to survive in the modern day. The curved blade is carved to resemble not the crescent moon, but the clutching talons of an owl. The Owl Talon has all the qualities of the standard fetish d'siah above. In addition, a second spirit, that of a desert owl, is bound to the blade; when the knife is activated to drain Gnosis after a successful strike, the owl-spirit snatches the energy up and channels it to the wielder, who adds it to his temporary Gnosis. The wielder's Gnosis may never exceed his permanent rating in this manner. Also, the wielder may activate the fetish after a successful blow against an Egyptian vampire. If successful, a blood point is drained from the vampire and converted into Gnosis for the d'siah's wielder. This Gnosis is dark and unnatural, and may push the werewolf into frenzy — as long as the character has the tainted Gnosis in his pool, his difficulties to frenzy are reduced by one per point of tainted Gnosis. Once the affected points of Gnosis are spent, the Garou's frenzy difficulties return to normal.

MET: Level Five, Gnosis 7. This ancient weapon functions as an ordinary d'siah, described above. Additionally, when the character succeeds in the Gnosis test that is part of a d'siah's attack, he gains a Gnosis trait. The character can never have more Gnosis Traits than his normal maximum. The character can also use the Owl Talon D'siah to drain Blood Traits from vampires, and transfer them into Gnosis in a similar fashion. However, a Blood Trait that has been converted into Gnosis carries some Wyrm taint with it, and the character gains a "Dark Gnosis" Negative Trait that must be used against him during Frenzy tests. The Dark Gnosis trait is lost when the character expends the Gnosis that he got from vampire blood.

Talens

Wadjet's Fang

Gnosis 6

The throwing stick was a hunting weapon favored by Egyptian nobility. Typically, the throwing stick was ornately carved, with one end weighted so that the

stick would spin through the air to strike the target (typically a marsh-dwelling bird) with the heavy end. While the Silent Striders' enemies are made of sterner stuff than spindly-legged birds, Cobra's spirit children are always willing to fight at the Striders' side — cobra-spirits readily enter snake-carved throwing sticks. Hitting the target with a throwing stick requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll from the player against a difficulty of 7. A successful hit inflicts the character's Strength in dice of bashing damage. If the Wadjet's Fang is successfully activated, the venomous snake-spirit inflicts an additional three dice of aggravated damage.

If the stick-smacked opponent doesn't intentionally break the throwing stick, and if the weapon inflicts less than five bashing damage (before the opponent's soak), the throwing stick is probably intact. While Cobra's brood are almost always willing to enter Wadjet's Fang, they are downright eager to inhabit a throwing stick that has damaged a powerful enemy and may compete for the honor. (At the Storyteller's option, each Gnosis spent in the Rite of Binding reduces the spirit's Gnosis rating by two rather than one for one.)

MET: Gnosis 6. A thrown Wadjet's Fang uses a Physical Test to hit and the Athletics ability allows for a retest. A successful hit does one Health Level of aggravated damage.

Pectoral of Terror

Gnosis 8

These talens are extremely rare, and their owners rarely know the name or true nature of the beautiful necklace they have in their possession. Today these pectorals are usually created by the Silent Striders for use against the Black Spiral Dancers; others are created for use against Garou who have committed great wrongs against the tribe. The Pectoral of Terror appears to simply be a valuable and beautiful necklace, often conveniently "dropped" by a Strider (who must successfully activate the talen) fleeing the scene. It is wrought of highly refined gold, and polished as perfect as a mirror. In the hands of a human or even a vampire it is simply what it appears to be, but in the hands of a Garou it is a time bomb. The spirit bound to the pectoral is a ghost, and it hides on the edge of the Dark Umbra — only an exceptionally gifted Theurge could spot it lurking there, and few would think to try. If ever a Garou uses the polished surface of the pectoral as an aid to crossing the Gauntlet, the ghost within it snatches the werewolf away mid-crossing, pulling him instead into the Dark Umbra. The shades of the dead are drawn to these talens, especially those who hold a grievance against the proud, unsuspecting owner. They gather like vultures in the lands of the dead, waiting with the patience of the unliving for their chance at revenge.

MET: Gnosis 8. The Pectoral of Terror functions as described above in Mind's Eye Theater, as there are no game mechanics or die rolls associated with its use.

Totems

The totems that follow are allied with Owl's brood, and are usually willing to help the Silent Striders by serving as pack totems, or by permitting their children to empower fetishes and talens to be used against their common enemies.

Totems of Respect

North Star

Background Cost: 5

When the banks of the Nile were the Silent Striders' greatest concern, the tribe had little use for the North Star (known as Vegarda to many Garou), and she cared little for them. After the Striders were expelled from Egypt and scattered to the wind, their millennia of wandering under the North Star's light, reliant on her guidance to find their way, softened the brilliant, hard heart of the Incarna. She sent her spirit children to the Striders to share her gifts to aid travelers, and to watch over them as totem spirits.

Traits: Each member of a pack that follows the North Star receives two dice of Survival. They also receive the skill Area Knowledge at two dice for any location in the Northern Hemisphere where the light of the stars is not overwhelmed by man-made light (no large cities, but small towns and rural areas). Upon acquiring the North Star as a totem, members of the pack receive one point of temporary Honor renown.

Ban: The North Star requires that her packs travel often, accepting all legitimate quests and message-carrying duties.

MET: North Star grants the Traits: *Survival* x2 and *Area Knowledge* x2 available only in the Northern Hemisphere where the light of the stars can be seen at night. Each pack member gains one Honor.

Scarab

Background Cost: 5

The Scarab, Khephri, is a spirit of creation and renewal. As a symbol of the rising sun, he is part of Helios' brood, and all things that scatter and hide when dawn's light creeps over the horizon hate him. Scarab is patient and careful, never encouraging destruction for its own sake — carefully timed acts of creation and destruction, the totem knows, are both more effective and more fulfilling. Unlike most of

Helios' brood, Scarab is even stronger during a solar eclipse: during a total eclipse, the sun's flare around the disk of the moon emblazons the sign of the Scarab in the sky, and monsters that crawl out of hiding in those few precious moments are sure to taste Scarab's hoarded wrath.

Traits: All children of Scarab learn the minor rite Greet the Sun. Once per story, each member of the pack may channel Scarab's regal bearing, radiating the light of the sun; for the duration of the scene in which this power is invoked, the child of Scarab is treated as though he had Pure Breed 5. When a child of Scarab spends Willpower on extended rolls, each point expended after the first round of the extended roll counts as two successes. And finally, during the brief duration of a natural solar eclipse each child of Scarab may add two dice to all actions.

Ban: Scarab insists that his children greet the sun each morning. On a more abstract level, Scarab shuns those Garou who reflexively turn to their Rage to solve problems without attempting alternative solutions (with exceptions granted during the precious moments of an eclipse, when a well-timed frenzy is often a vital part of the plan).

MET: Children of Scarab learn the minor rite Greet the Sun. Once per story, each member of the pack may take on the benefits of *Pure Breed* x5 for one scene. Once per session, a child of Scarab may expend a Willpower Trait to gain a retest on a static challenge. Finally, during the totality of a solar eclipse, children of Scarab can expend Willpower to gain a retest on any challenge.

Totems of War

Cobra

Background Cost: 7

The queen of the cobras was known to the Egyptian people as the goddess Wadjet, the protectress of the pharaoh. The theft of her symbols and the corruption of a number of her spirit brood by vampires like Sutekh infuriated the goddess; a serpent's fury is cold, and only grows with time. Warlike Silent Striders and angry cobra-spirits are drawn to each other, joining together to take their war to the corrupting minions of the Wyrm — especially the Leeches. And woe to anyone else who stands in their way.

Traits: Children of Cobra gain an immunity to snake venom, and an additional four dice to soak any other poison damage. Also, once per day, each member of the pack gains the ability to inflict four dice of lethal poison damage with his bite, in addition to the damage from the bite itself. Against Banes and vampires, this damage is aggravated.

Ban: Cobra grows impatient with Garou who will not fight (though of course she has no problem with stealth and ambush tactics). She demands that her packs take every opportunity to root out the vampires of Egypt and their corruption.

MET: Children of Cobra take no damage from snake venom. They get a three-trait bonus to deal with any other poison damage. Once per day, a single member of the pack can inflict four Health Levels of poison damage with his bite in addition to his basic bite damage. This poison does aggravated damage against Wyrm-spirits and vampires.

Sphinx-of-War

Background Cost: 8

The Egyptians called Sphinx by the name Aker and venerated him as the guardian of the horizon: the dividing line between day and night, and between the worlds of the living and the dead. But even the humans knew that Sphinx was not "their" god; Sphinx existed long before human worship began. He was a powerful chthonic entity, a force of nature, a vital part of the order of the cosmos. As the guardian of the lands of the dead, Sphinx despises ghosts and vampires that defy the natural progression of life and worse, wreak havoc among the living. It is also Sphinx's charge to guard the severed coils of Apep — the Wyrm — so that the enemy cannot regain his power.

Traits: Children of Sphinx may cross the Gauntlet into the Dark Umbra at the setting of the sun (as though they used the rite Descend into the Dark Umbra, with no blood sacrifice required). The difficulty of mind- or emotion-affecting powers used by the dead or undead is increased by 2 against children of Sphinx. Last, once per lunar year a pack that follows Sphinx may call upon their totem to seize one already defeated, Wyrm-tainted foe (or part of one). That enemy (or that part of the enemy) is spirited away to Sphinx's Umbral realm, and it will never return (or re-grow).

Ban: Children of Sphinx must return dead creatures to the land of the dead. Period. They are not required to destroy them or defeat them in combat, but the dead must remain where the dead belong.

MET: Children of Sphinx may cross the Gauntlet into the Dark Umbra at the setting of the sun as though they used the rite Descend into the Dark Umbra, with no blood sacrifice required. They gain two extra Mental Traits in defense against mind- or emotion-affecting powers used by the dead or undead. Once per month a pack that follows Sphinx can ask their totem to seize a defeated Wyrm-tainted foe or object. The foe is taken to the Umbral realm of the Sphinx and cannot return or regrow.

Sphinx-of-Wisdom

Like most greater spirits, Sphinx has many faces and different aspects. Sphinx also appears as a Totem of Wisdom in **Tribebook: Red Talons**; this female aspect is just as valid for Strider packs.

Crocodile

Background Cost: 5

Crocodile is a wily hunter. He lurks, unmoving and unseen, beneath murky waters; the violent end of any prey that wanders too close to his jaws is inevitable. Crocodile chooses wily warriors among the Garou to call his children, taking only those who understand that surprise and overwhelming strength is the only way to win.

Traits: Crocodile grants each of his children an additional die of damage with the bite maneuver (and the teeth of his children appear unusually long and sharp, even in Homid form). Also, each member of the pack can channel Crocodile's cold calm to force down a frenzy. Upon invoking this ability, the urge to frenzy disappears, and the werewolf cannot frenzy for the remainder of the scene. This ability can only be used once per story.

Ban: Packs that follow Crocodile must not attack or bring harm to the Mokolé, the reclusive reptilian shapechangers. This is a ban that is not tested often, but when it does come into play, these packs might be accused as traitors.

MET: Each packmember's bite attack does an additional Health Level of damage. Once per story, each packmember can avoid an incipient frenzy altogether, but in so doing loses the ability to frenzy (whether willingly or unwillingly) for the rest of the scene.

Totems of Wisdom

Ibis

Background Cost: 6

The ibis has since ancient times been the symbol of Thoth, the healer, scribe and keeper of mystic lore. The ibis is also a moon spirit, one of Luna's brood — for the Egyptians, Thoth ruled the moon's path through the night, and even today the curved beak of the ibis is seen as symbolic of the crescent moon. Ibis's greatest gift to the Garou is memory: The Garou seldom record their thoughts, plans or teachings, but Ibis does, and his writings are incorruptible and enduring. The Ibis guards many secrets that would otherwise be lost to the Silent Striders — and some that have been lost, as the Striders have forgotten even to ask.

Traits: Packs that follow Ibis may call on their totem to aid their memory, as the spirit records their experiences. Any sight, sound, message or even scent may be recalled (requiring an Intelligence roll at a variable difficulty). Note that unless the pack spends Background points to improve their totem so that it may remain in contact with all of them, if the pack splits up, only members that remain with the totem spirit will have their experiences recorded. Even more importantly for the Striders, a child of Ibis can ask after any specific memory recorded from any child of Ibis, living or dead (success requires a properly worded request, a successful Intelligence + Enigmas roll at a difficulty of 10 from the player, and usually a great deal of time). The difficulty of all magic worked against children of Ibis (whether "true magick," hedge wizardry or vampiric Thaumaturgy) is raised by one. Lastly, packs pledged to Ibis gain three dice of Medicine that may be allocated among the pack's members.

Ban: Followers of Ibis may not harm marsh birds, nor may they use throwing sticks as weapons (like the Wadjet's Fang talen). Since Thoth was the advocate for the dead, children of Ibis must also intercede on behalf of ghosts in need of help to continue their journey to the afterlife.

MET: Ibis grants *Medicine*x3. Pack members gain an additional trait to resist magic of any sort. Characters can take advantage of Ibis's ability to record their memories as described above. Getting one's totem to recall the memory of another child of Ibis requires a static Mental Test against a difficulty of 10 and will take as long as the Storyteller deems necessary.

Sirius, the Dog Star

Background Cost: 4

This star, the brightest in the night sky, was of special importance to the Egyptians. They celebrated the start of their year when Sirius rose with the sun, a harbinger of the annual flooding and re-fertilization of the Nile River. To those ancient Egyptians, Sirius was the embodiment of Isis, but many other human cultures recognized the canine qualities of the star and its constellation, creating legends about dogs with qualities from noble loyalty to unmatchable speed. The Incarna Sirius does favor a canine form, and so feels a fondness for the Garou, the Silent Striders in particu-

lar. He is recognized as a totem of Wisdom because his gifts to his children focus on marking the passage of time and making predictions, but the Dog Star is still always fond of a good race.

Traits: Packs that follow the Dog Star receive a point of Wits and two dice in Enigmas (only one pack member may use these bonuses at a time). All pack members receive two bonus dice when performing seasonal rites. Finally, all children of Sirius receive an Athletics specialty in "sprinting."

Ban: The Dog Star's children must mark the yearly rising of the star over Egypt with an elaborate ritual, no matter where they may be.

MET: *Intuitive*, *Quick*, *Enigmas* x2. Characters receive two bonus Traits to perform seasonal rites.

Totems of Cunning

Gull

Background Cost: 4

The seagull might not be a particularly attractive or friendly bird, but it is a tough and canny survivor, found the world over. For those willing to look beyond the bird droppings and trash eating, Gull is willing to share what her quick, darting eyes have seen in her travels.

Traits: Gull's children each receive two dice in the Area Knowledge skill for coastal areas around the world (including large lakes). In addition, Gull's children float as easily as she does. In the physical world, no Athletics check is needed to float on top the water for any length of time, and any roll to swim back to the surface is made at -2 difficulty. In the Umbra, children of Gull can run across the surface of the water. Due to the totem's unsavory habits, children of Gull lose two points of temporary Honor renown upon adopting this totem.

Ban: Gull cannot bear to spend any long period of time away from open water. The pack's totem will not insist that they remain near the shore, but if the pack remains inland for too long (in the Storyteller's estimation), she will return to the sea, taking all pack benefits with her. This includes such benefits as crossing the Gauntlet as a pack and any telepathic bonding the totem may provide. Gull happily rejoins the pack as soon as they return to environs she enjoys.

MET: *Area Knowledge*x2 (for coastal areas and large lakes), *Athletics* x2 (for swimming and aquatic activity only). In the Umbra, packmembers can run across the surface of the water. Children of Gull lose 2 Honor.

Merits & Flaws

Ghost Sight (4 pt. Merit)

This merit allows (or perhaps inflicts) glimpses of sight into the Dark Umbra. It is not always in effect, which is a blessing; any living creature who could see all that goes on a heartbeat away in the land of the dead would undoubtedly go mad — especially since many who possess the sight develop it in childhood. The sight comes over the Strider (or Strider Kinfolk) when something of importance is happening in the Dark Umbra (a strong ghost is present, someone or something is watching the werewolf) or in places that are significant to the dead (the place, or an object within, is of great importance to a ghost).

MET: Four Trait Merit. Otherwise this Merit functions as described.

Gift of Wepawwet (5 pt. Merit)

Some way, some how, the character does not suffer the curse of Sutekh. The spirits of her ancestors come to her in times of need, as if she has some sort of mystic channel or spiritual beacon that calls to them from their lost wanderings or imprisonment. The character embodies the great hope of the Silent Strider tribe — and calls up many of their worst fears, as well. After choosing this Merit, the player may purchase the Ancestors Background as usual for other tribes of Garou. The character also receives three points of temporary Renown: one each in Honor, Glory, and Wisdom. Expectations will be high for this character's future deeds, which may be a benefit or a drawback depending on the situation.

MET: Five Trait Merit. The character may purchase the Ancestors background as though he was a member of another tribe. The character gains one Honor, one Glory, and one Wisdom.

Chapter Four: Children of the Sands

Egypt is in my blood.
— Evelyn Carnahan, *The Mummy* (1999)

To most outsiders, the Silent Striders are seen as a tribe of outcasts. They have been driven from the lands of Khem and are now forced to wander the open road, forever denied a place to rest. And, indeed, this is true. But to consider them only as outcasts would be a disservice. It implies a sense of defeat and focuses only on the hardships the Silent Striders must endure. For the Silent Striders, their curse is not a burden but is instead an obstacle to be overcome. The difference is subtle but important. One implies acceptance of things as they are. A capitulation to circumstances which cannot be changed. The other implies a refusal of those same circumstances. A rebellion against that which is and a focus on that which may be.

Every tribe has something that lies at its heart, a quality that resonates within each of its members. Passion. Strength. Secrets. At the heart of the Silent Striders is the Quest. The open road is not a destination in and of it self. It must, by its very definition, lead somewhere. For every Silent Strider, there is something at the end of the road. Something she is looking for and wants to find. Some Silent Striders quest for Ma'at or for knowledge of the past. Others search for an escape from the tribal curse or for warnings of the future. Love and family are sought just as passionately as justice and revenge. Ultimately, all of these quests are in search of the same thing. It is a quest for a place to call home.

This chapter looks at some of the heroes of the Silent Striders. Not just those of the past and present, but also at those who might become the heroes of the future.

The Vampire Slayer

Quote: *Okay, I get it. You're evil and you have a snake fetish. Can we hurry this up? I've got better things to do.*

Prelude: You had the ideal teenage life: nice house, parents who trusted you, co-captain of the cheerleading squad, lots of friends and plenty of cute boys fawning over you. Life was good. And then everything went to hell.

A vampire attack at a school dance resulted in over a dozen dead classmates, half the school going up in flames and you being kidnapped by werewolves. Even worse, it turned out you were a werewolf too. You spent the next several months learning about what you had become and how to take care of yourself. Turns out, you actually had a knack for fighting. The others treated it like this big deal, but all you wanted to do was get a handle on things and go back to your real life as if nothing had happened. If only things could be that simple.

You came home after your Rite of Passage, but nothing was the same. Everyone blamed you for the fire and treated you like a total psycho. You couldn't get back into school and your parents even seemed scared of you. And the vampires were still out there. You tried to ignore them, but then their victims started appearing in your dreams. Going back to a normal life was no longer an option. Finally you came to a decision: The vampires ruined your life, so the vampires will all just have to die.

Concept: Your life was perfect before all of this Garou business ruined things, and whenever you think about how much your life has changed you just get more and more pissed off. For now, the bulk of your frustration is directed at Leeches, but you try to avoid the rest of your kind when you can. Although you lean more toward your auspice's role of clever warrior than that of Questioner, the answers you find to your own questions about what you do and why you do it will someday enable you to better understand your place in Garou society and to help others understand their own place.

Roleplaying Hints: Refuse to accept the way things are just because it's *always* been that way. Killing vampires and other monsters provides a much-needed outlet for your frustrations, and without that safety valve you become increasingly hard to deal with. Your strong sarcastic streak takes on a nasty edge when mocking your foes. For now, the world revolves around you and you ignore things you don't want to deal with. If you survive long enough, you might gain a better appreciation of how important what you do actually is.

Equipment: Durable yet fashionable clothes, a sizable collection of knives, wooden stakes and other weapons, several Kinfolk friends and the beat up van you all live out of, and a large chip on your shoulder.

Silent Striders

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Homid
Auspice: Ragabash
Camp:

Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Vampire Slayer

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●●○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○	Occult	●●○○○
Primal-Urge	●○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Allies	●○○○○	Master of Fire	
Kinfolk	●●○○○	Open Seal	
PureBreed	●●○○○	Sense Wyrm	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown
Glory ●●○○○○○○○○
Honor ●○○○○○○○○○
Wisdom ○○○○○○○○○○
Rank 1

Rage ●●●○○○○○○○
Gnosis ●○○○○○○○○○
Willpower ●●●●●○○○○○

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness
HAUNTED:
ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

The Son of Anubis

Quote: *Death is only a doorway, with a world of knowledge and wisdom on the other side. I've lived with the dead all my life. Nothing they can do frightens me anymore.*

Prelude: Your earliest memories were of being kept locked in the basement of an English country estate, endlessly tormented by the spirits of the dead. The Kinfolk you had been left with did little more than feed you and your only source of comfort came from the collection of Egyptian memorabilia that cluttered one corner of your basement prison. Something in their designs spoke to your soul. Most important was the statue that looked like you. It stood there with quiet strength and dignity, and you sought to adapt those traits as your own. It filled your dreams and helped you find the power within yourself to stand against your ghostly assailants.

After your Change, you found yourself thrust among others of your kind for the first time. There, you eagerly learned the ways of your people and the secrets of the spirit world. Some said that you were a creature born of sin and should have been killed at birth. You knew this to be a lie and ignored them with the same quiet dignity your guardian had once shown. In your studies, you had learned the truth. The figure who gave you solace and strength was a god; one who guided and had power over the dead. And you had been created in his image.

Your natural aptitude for dealing with spirits, especially those of the dead, was quickly noticed by others within your sept. Theurges took you under their wing, teaching you their rites and the secrets of the spirits of Life and Death. Your insatiable appetite for knowledge also attracted the interest of people dedicated to the pursuit of the lost wisdom and secret histories of the world. Now you pursue wisdom in the dust of the past and in the hidden realms of Du'at.

Concept: Your earliest exposures to the basic knowledge you'd long been denied opened your eyes and helped put your entire existence into perspective. Learning more will only improve that understanding of self and of the world around you. You are an accomplished self-taught historian and archaeologist, and the Dark Umbra is simply one more tomb for you to explore. The Seekers provide you with access to peers who share your thirst for knowledge and whom you can count on to offer intelligent conversation. Among your goals is finding a way to break the curse, so that others will not have to suffer as you did.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the son of Anubis, and must act in accordance with your station. Be polite and well spoken at all times, even when insulting those beneath you. You are unabashedly unashamed of the fact that you are a metis, and turn your nose up to anyone boorish enough to claim it's a shameful thing.

Equipment: Priestly robes, gold jewelry, ceremonial staff, d'siah.

Metis Deformity: Hairless

Silent Striders

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Breed: Metis
Auspice: Theurge
Camp: Seekers
Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Mystery Archaeologist

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●●○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●●○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Occult	●●●●○
Primal-Urge	●○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	●●●●○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	●○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Fetish	●●●○○	Sense Wyrm	
Rites	●●●●○	Spirit Speech	
	○○○○○	Silence	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown
Glory ○○○○○○○○○○
Honor ○○○○○○○○○○
Wisdom ●●●○○○○○○○

Rank 1

Rage ●●○○○○○○○○

Gnosis ●●●○○○○○○○

Willpower ●●●●●●○○○○

Health

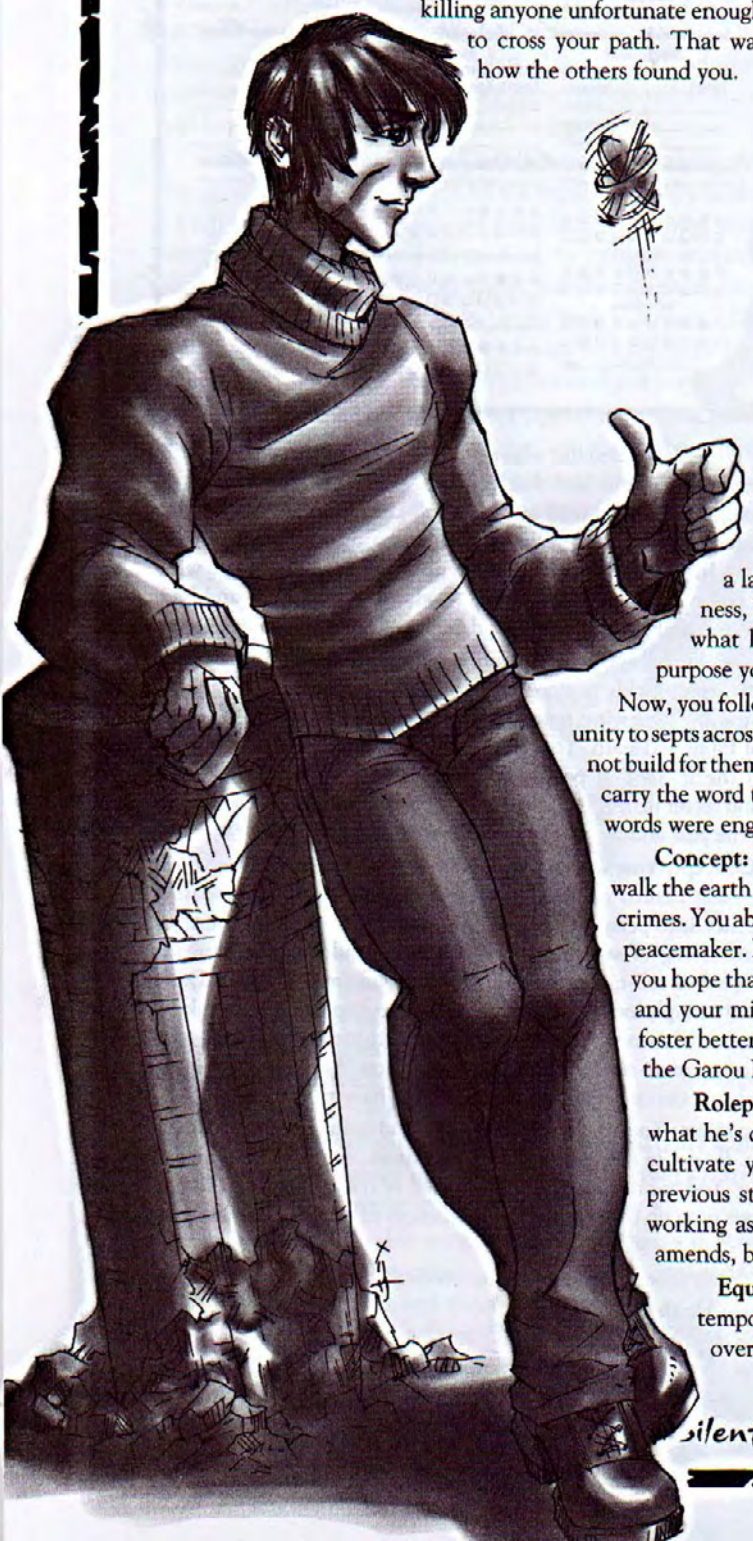
Bruised	☐
Hurt -1	☐
Injured -1	☐
Wounded -2	☐
Mauled -2	☐
Crippled -5	☐
Incapacitated	☐

Tribal Weakness
HAUNTED:
ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

The Peacemaker

Quote: *I have seen too much blood and strife born of hatred and mistrust in my life already. I'm offering you a different path, if you are willing to take it.*

Prelude: The country you were born in doesn't even exist anymore. It was torn apart by petty men who used hate to bring themselves to power. One day, they came and shot your father, then raped your mother and sisters. They should have killed you when they did your father. You showed these men of hate what true hate really was. But in your rage, you also killed your family. Your mind broke under the strain and for the next two years, you were little more than a savage beast, stalking and killing anyone unfortunate enough to cross your path. That was how the others found you.



Silent Striders

Name: | **Breed:** Homid | **Pack Name:**
Player: | **Auspice:** Philodox | **Pack Totem:**
Chronicle: | **Camp:** | **Concept:** Traveling Negotiator

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Law	●●○○○
Empathy	●●●○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●●●○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	●●●○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Contacts	●●●○○	Persuasion	
Fetish	●●●○○	Truth of Gaia	
Pure Breed	●●●○○	Speed of Thought	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown

Glory ○○○○○○○○○○
Honor ●●●○○○○○○○
Wisdom ○○○○○○○○○○

Rank: 1

Rage: ●●●●○○○○○○

Gnosis: ●●○○○○○○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●○○○○○

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness: HAUNTED: ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

Slowly, your mind healed and you learned what you had become. But without your hate, your life was without direction, and the ghosts of your innocent victims were slowly driving you mad. You might have fallen into Harano if it weren't for the Margrave. In a land where people build petty kingdoms out of hatred and divisiveness, here was a man who spoke of unity. His words and deeds rekindled what little idealism remained in your heart and gave you the sense of purpose you needed to finally complete your Rite of Passage.

Now, you follow the lead of the European Shadow Lords, and bring their calls for unity to septs across the continent, and even beyond. What the humans cannot and will not build for themselves, the Garou — the right Garou — can build in their stead. You carry the word that peace can be achieved, and you argue for cooperation as if the words were engraved on your heart. And they are.

Concept: The only home you knew was torn apart and now you are forced to walk the earth seeking to escape the ghosts of your past and to do penance for your crimes. You abstain from your auspice's role as judge, acting instead as mediator and peacemaker. In your mind, the Margrave is the last, best hope for your people and you hope that by aiding his efforts, you can help build a home for your tribe. You and your mixed pack travel across Europe and the rest of the world, trying to foster better cooperation among the tribes and to show people that the future of the Garou Nation lies with the Margrave and his plans.

Roleplaying Hints: You honestly and truly believe in the Margrave and what he's doing. Struggle desperately to control your Rage while working to cultivate your spiritual connection to Gaia. The fear of returning to your previous state haunts you, as do the ghosts of those you killed. You enjoy working as a wandering negotiator — not just for the opportunity to make amends, but to leave behind the places haunted by painful memories.

Equipment: Coin of Wealth (Level 3, Gnosis 8; activation grants one temporary levels in the Resources Background per two successes rolled; overuse causes the fetish to shrink and lose potency)

The Harbinger of Hope

Quote: *The Wyrm is here, now. Will you cower in your burrows like rabbits, or will you face it like Gaia's chosen?*

Prelude: You were born in the wilderness. Where, exactly, is unimportant to you. From birth, the others all looked at you strangely. They could sense that something dark hung over you, making you different. Eventually, you learned just how different you were. Your First Change was a terrifying surprise, completely without warning. The rest of the pack fled from you, and you were forced to wander alone for over a week before a nomadic pack of Silent Striders found you. You learned of Gaia and of the spirit world, putting names to concepts you'd previously only sensed by instinct. You also learned of your sacred duty to protect Gaia, of your tribe's failure to protect Khem and of their quest to help prevent other tribes from sharing that failure.

Silent Striders

Name: | Breed: Lupus | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Galliard | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: Harbingers | Concept: Harbinger of Hope

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●●●●○	Leadership	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Mentor	●●○○○	Heightened Senses	
Pure Breed	●●●●○	Beast Speech	
Totem	●○○○○	Grim Resolve	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown: Glory ●●○○○○○○○○ / Honor ○○○○○○○○○○ / Wisdom ●○○○○○○○○○

Rage: ●●●○○○○○○○

Gnosis: ●●●●●○○○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●●●○○○

Rank: 1

Health:

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness: HAUNTED: ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

Your first visit to a caern came as a shock to you. The guardians had fallen to despair, saying their enemies were too great. You almost fell to despair yourself at their shameful words and actions. What hope could there be if Gaia's champions had fallen so far? But your new pack did not fall to despair. Instead, they rallied the sept. Their words and their strength brought back hope. They helped the sept slay several of its enemies. One of those hunts even served as part of your Rite of Passage.

When you and your mentors left the caern, it was stronger than when you arrived, and they once again took up their duties with renewed purpose and vigor. You saw first-hand the power that hope has and you wanted to share that power with others. The leader of your pack was pleased with your attitude, and began to teach you of the Harbingers and their secrets.

Concept: You are the epitome of your tribe and of your camp: a traveler who arrives bearing news and dreaded warnings of danger. But while you bring warnings, you also bring hope. In the End Times, you bring what may be the most precious and vital thing in this World of Darkness: the inspiration to keep struggling. To not give up and to fight against the darkness.

Roleplaying Hints: The human concept of angst is alien to you. As a wolf, you are accustomed to living for the moment, without dwelling on the past or endlessly worrying about the uncertainties of the future. The problems of the present are challenges to be overcome, not insurmountable obstacles. Remind those who have lost hope that as long as they still live, they have the power and the ability to change things. Failure is never certain unless one gives up. Despair is the Wyrm's greatest weapon, and you refuse to let your people succumb to its power.

Equipment: Nothing, save your voice and your message of hope.

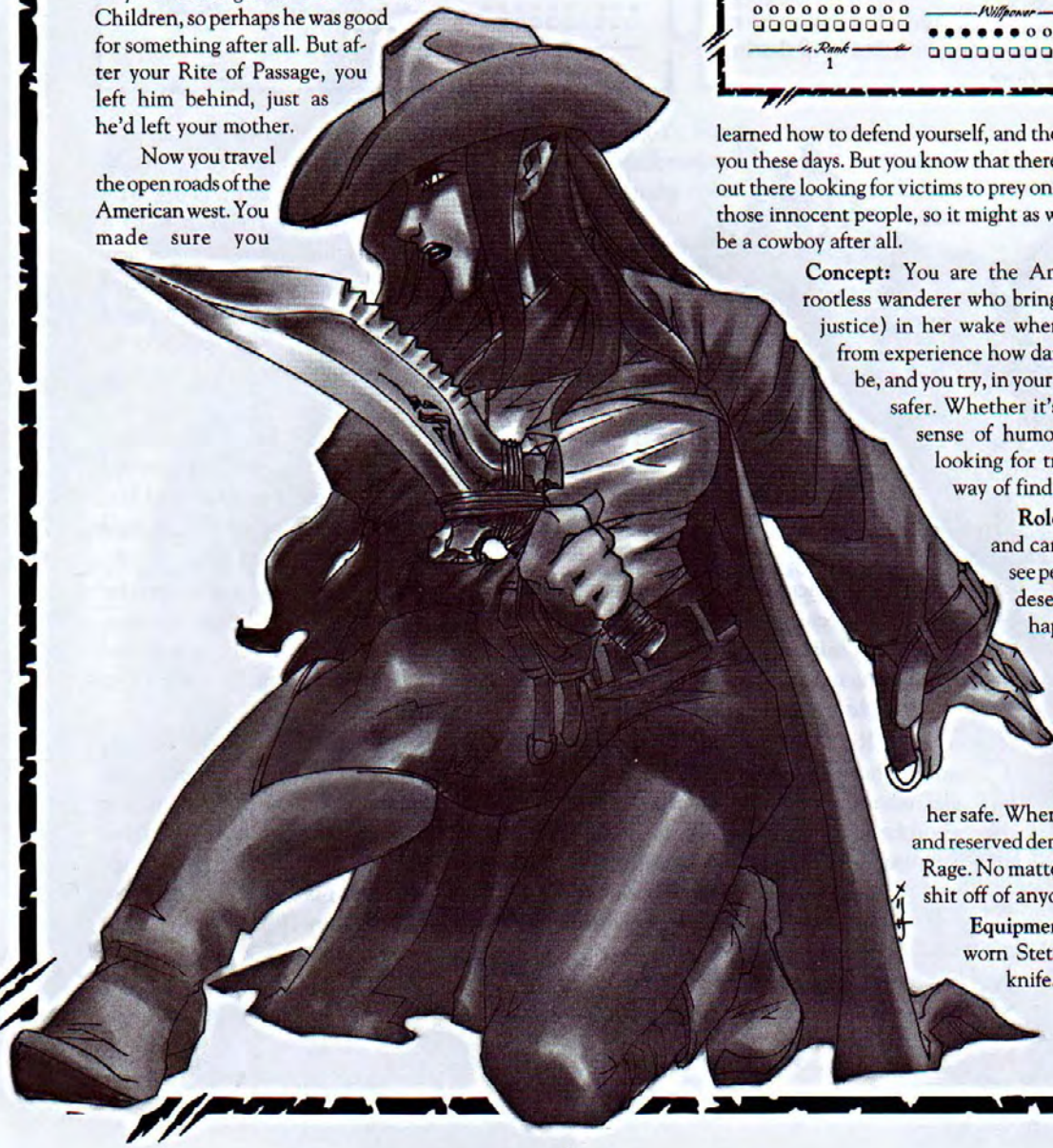
The Garou with No Name

Quote: *I said I didn't want any trouble. I never said I couldn't dish it out.*

Prelude: You were born in New Mexico, in a town that barely qualified as such. Your mother worked as a waitress at the local truck stop and you never knew your father. Growing up, you didn't have much to look forward to. When you were younger, you wanted to be a cowboy, like you saw on the TV at the diner, but everyone kept telling you that girls weren't supposed to act like John Wayne or Gary Cooper. You became convinced that there was something better waiting for you down the road, so at the age of fifteen, you ran away from home. In hindsight, you should've known better. There're plenty of bad people out there looking for something to prey on, and a hitchhiking teenage runaway is at the top of the list. Your First Change saved you from becoming another nameless statistic.

You spent several days lost and alone in the desert, delirious and dying of thirst before a coyote-spirit led you to the bawn of a caern. They took you in and nursed you back to health while teaching you about what you'd become. Soon after that, a man arrived claiming to be your father. He was like you and told you that was why he couldn't stay with your mother, but for some reason you never quite believed him. He also taught you the rest of your birthright as one of Owl's Children, so perhaps he was good for something after all. But after your Rite of Passage, you left him behind, just as he'd left your mother.

Now you travel the open roads of the American west. You made sure you learned how to defend yourself, and there is little that intimidates you these days. But you know that there's still plenty of bad people out there looking for victims to prey on. Someone needs to protect those innocent people, so it might as well be you. Maybe you can be a cowboy after all.



Concept: You are the American archetype of the rootless wanderer who brings trouble (and sometimes justice) in her wake wherever she goes. You know from experience how dangerous the open road can be, and you try, in your own way, to make it a little safer. Whether it's the will of Gaia or fate's sense of humor, even when you aren't looking for trouble, it seems to have a way of finding you..

Roleplaying Hints: Talk softly and carry a big stick. You hate to see people suffer when they don't deserve it, but are perfectly happy to break someone's arm (or worse) if they do. Your biggest soft spot is for other runaways, and you've been known to spend days at a time shadowing one to help keep her safe. When trouble comes, your quiet and reserved demeanor is subsumed by your Rage. No matter what, you never take any shit off of anyone.

Equipment: Broken-in boots, well-worn Stetson, leather jacket, Bowie knife.

Silent Striders

Name: **Breed:** Homid **Pack Name:**
Player: **Auspice:** Ahroun **Pack Totem:**
Chronicle: **Camp:** **Concept:** Garou With No Name

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●●●●○	Melee	●●○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Pure Breed	●○○○○	Smell of Man	
Totem	●●●●●	Falling Touch	
	○○○○○	Heaven's Guidance	
	○○○○○	Sense Wyrm	
	○○○○○		

Renown
Glory ●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□
Honor ●○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□
Wisdom ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Rank: 1

Rage ●●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Gnosis ●○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Willpower ●●●●●●○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Tribal Weakness
HAUNTED:
ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

Travelers

Like every tribe, the Silent Striders have a long list of members famous and infamous. Striders around the world tell stories of these Garou, about Elizabeth Chang ("Heaven's Justice"), the Philodox gunslinger who quests for bloody justice in the streets of Hong Kong while serving as a member of the Beast Courts, and about Anubis Hillwalker, the Appalachian revivalist preacher who tells the region's Garou of how the Perfect Metis is the Antichrist and that only those who truly have faith in Gaia will be rewarded upon her inevitable victory over the Great Beast in the battle of Armageddon. They speak of Shu Horus, the invincible warrior of ancient Khem who fought a dead god to a standstill and lived, and of Buries-the-Dead, the Egyptian Ahroun who battles for the tribe's lost homeland this very night. These stories and more help to remind the Striders that no matter how long and hard the road has been, they do not travel it alone.

The following represent only a small sampling of those the Silent Striders call heroes.

Wepauwet

In all of Gaia's creation there has never been and there never will be another creature like Wepauwet. In the days of ancient Khem, Wepauwet earned fame and glory as one of his tribe's greatest warriors. He was blood-brother and closest advisor to Shu Horus, the legendary leader of the Silent Striders, and served as his lord's trusted diplomat to the sect of immortal warrior-mystics who followed the man known only as Horus, Avenger of his Father. Wepauwet's loyalty to his blood-brother was exceeded only by his love for his people and for the lands of Khem and by his hatred for the accursed Cult of Sutekh.

When the curse of the dead god Sutekh drove the Silent Striders from Khem and cut them off from the spirits of their ancestors, Wepauwet was among the first to recognize the direst implications of the latter part of the curse. Cut off from the voices of their past, his people were in danger of losing untold amounts of wisdom. If the curse could not be broken quickly, knowledge and lore that might someday be vital in breaking the curse could be lost to the sands of time. So great was Wepauwet's love for his tribe that against the wishes of his life long friend, he dared to return to the lands of Khem in order to seek out the Avenger of his Father. In exchange for the secrets of immortality, Wepauwet agreed to serve as the Avenger's weapon against the Cult of Sutekh for as long as he walked the earth. The ancient warrior agreed to the Garou's deal and had his priests perform the sacred rituals of rebirth that enabled his followers to be reborn again and again. In this, Wepauwet hoped to serve as an immortal record of his tribe's history, lore and secrets. Such was not to be.

The immortality rituals used by the Avenger of his Father were designed to be used only on mortal men, and not on Gaia's half-flesh, half-spirit champions. After his First Death, Owl himself came to Wepauwet and told the Garou warrior that this would be the only time he would be allowed to escape the natural end Gaia plans for every living creature. Should he die again, the spirit told him, he would be cursed to wander the Umbra as a fleshless spirit, forever barred from both his Tribal Homeland and from his living people. His plan to cheat Sutekh's curse a failure, Wepauwet was disheartened. However, Owl recognized how much Wepauwet was willing to sacrifice for his tribe and offered to lead the Silent Strider to his tribe's Umbral Homeland. There, he would dwell for eternity, disconnected from the physical world. As a creature of both life and death, Wepauwet would serve as a link between his living tribe and the ancestors they had lost.

And so he has done for over two thousand years. Living Silent Striders who succeed in their quest to locate their Tribal Homeland find Wepauwet there, alone among ancient ruins that evoke memories of Khem. Those who spend any amount of time with the ancient wolf soon understand his secret. Wepauwet exists between two worlds. The ancestors of the Silent Striders still dwell in the Tribal Homeland, but they are unable to see or interact with their living

descendants. Wepauwet alone is the only being in the Realm who can fully interact with both the living and the dead members of his tribe. Those rare Silent Striders who find the realm are able to use Wepauwet as a go-between and communicate second hand with their ancestors.

Over the centuries, Wepauwet has never stopped working to reestablish the connections between his tribe and their ancestors. And he may have finally succeeded. Twenty-five years ago, the ancient spirit began an unprecedented experiment. Using powerful and legendary Rites not seen since the days of Khem, Wepauwet attempted to create a bond between the sacred name of his blood-brother Shu Horus and that of a newborn Silent Strider. The strain of the Rite nearly destroyed him, but to Wepauwet, the potential gain was worth any risk. In the proceeding years, he has repeated the rite on other newborn cubs of his tribe. Seven years ago, the experiment bore fruit. During her Rite of Passage, the young Silent Strider was able to channel the spirit of Shu Horus and use his power to destroy a large Cult of Sutekh nest. Since then, a handful of Wepauwet's other experiments have performed similar feats. For Wepauwet, these events mark the end of a journey begun centuries ago, and the start of a new one.

Statistics for Wepauwet may be found on page 142 of **Umbra**.

Vik Stryker

You should've been around with us in the Thirties, Mr. Snow. I can't begin to tell you what you missed. Glories.

— Doc Brass, *Planetary* (Warren Ellis)

If ever there was a poster boy for two-fisted tales of sheer damn manly adventure, Vik Stryker was it. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, he traveled the four corners of the globe and beyond in his endless quest for excitement, romance and justice. His battles against Sutekh cultists in the Middle East, the Black Steel Centipede Triad in China, and the Ku Klux Klan in America made him famous. His quest for the Lost Caern of Skull Island, his journey into the Umbral Realm of the Hollow Earth, and his recovery of the Malachite Scarab made him a legend. Through it all, Vik was accompanied by his fellow members of the Eagle's Nest Pack: Fianna Lorna McNab, Two-fisted Scots Banshee of Justice (Philodox); Glass Walker Dr. Stratus, Australian Garou of Science and Master of the Skies (Theurge); Shadow Lord Greta Cole, expatriate European heiress and femme fatale (Ragabash); and Stargazer An Lei Sheng, martial artist and mystic (Ahroun).

The 1940s were not kind to the Silent Strider Galliard or his friends. Greta and Sheng died in the War. Lorna returned home to help defend her family caern and Dr. Stratus, recognizing that the world was passing him by, left to explore the Umbra. As for Vik, a Nazi bomb cost him his eye and full use of his leg. The atrocities of the Holocaust sickened him, but not nearly as much as the uncomfortable silences which answered his demands to know why no one had tried to do anything about it while it was happening. The death of his longtime lover and eventual wife, Samantha, broke his heart. While seeking to avenge the deaths of several victims of Japanese wartime medical torture camps, the discovery that the country he'd grown up believing in had made deals with war criminals in exchange for their research notes crushed his sense of idealism. When his refusal to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities led to his arrest for contempt and later charges of conspiracy, Vik finally fell into Harano. Upon his release from federal prison in the 1960s, Vik left the America that had betrayed him for North Africa, where his downward spiral continued as he fell into heroin addiction. It was there that Vik Stryker lost the wolf.

Near the end of the 1970s, Vik, now a shell of his former self, finally returned to America. He lived on the streets of New York, surviving only on the charity of the handful of Bone Gnawers who remembered the tales of his exploits. Vik Stryker might have lived out the last of his days in such a sorry state, but one night fate intervened. Late one night, Vik came across a mugging, and for the first time in decades he felt the long dormant call to do something. With no regard for

his own safety, the nearly 80-year-old man with one good leg attacked the thug and broke his jaw with the same legendary right cross that had helped end the career of many a villain. With that one act, Vik Stryker escaped the clutches of Harano and regained some of the sense of purpose he'd lost over thirty years before.

Throughout the 1980s, Vik worked as a private investigator in New York before finally "retiring" to the small town of Pleasant Port, Maine in the 1990s. There, he assisted the local sheriff and did what he could to keep the town safe from the Wyrm. It was during this time that a number of younger Silent Striders sought out the aging hero, hoping to learn from his years of experience. He served as a mentor to several younger Garou, all the while continuing his own quest to regain the spirit of the wolf he had lost. In 2002, he succeeded.

As word spread through the region of a major Sutekh cult operating out of Portland, Vik insisted on doing what he could to help. Although most of the Garou gathered to battle the cult scoffed — what difference could a senior citizen with an aging Colt .45 and a sword cane possibly make? — Vik proved, as always, to be full of surprises. Even at the age of 100, Vik still possessed a mind sharper than many a third his age. His advice proved critical in planning the successful attack on the cult's temple. And even then, Vik managed to surprise even himself. The heat of battle and the chance to confront his most ancient and hated of foes finally provided the spark he needed to regain his Rage after so many decades without it. For the first time in forty years, Vik Stryker entered combat against the forces of the Wyrm in Crinos form. Although he fell in combat (against three of the cult's warriors), he had finally completed the long journey that had taken up the last half of is life. Vik Stryker is dead, but his legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of his tribe, in the memories and deeds of those he mentored, and in the stories told around campfires at night. The story of how one Silent Strider overcame the countless obstacles along the road to finally reach the end of his long and difficult journey.

Black Shuck

For centuries, the people of Norfolk have reported sightings of a ghostly giant black hound, the size of a calf and with eyes like burning embers. The hound, known as Black Shuck, haunts graveyards, lonely country roads and the hills and marshes around villages. According the legend, those who see Black Shuck are destined to die within the year — assuming the hound is not there to claim them then and there.

In truth, "Black Shuck" is not one hound, but a long lineage of Silent Striders born among one of the

last remaining wolf packs secretly preserved by England's Garou. The local Get of Fenris tell the story of Ahmad ibn Fadlan, an Arabic Silent Strider who came to England with the Fenrir warrior Buliwyf Bearslayer to battle a monstrous vampire and its brood. Although the Bearslayer died gloriously in battle, the Strider survived and bred with the wolves near Norfolk. Once every few generations, one of the wolves carrying Strider blood breeds true, and Black Shuck once again walks the earth.

The return of Black Shuck always signals the coming of difficult and often violent times ahead for England's Garou. His appearance coincides with the rise of powerful Wyrm beasts, spiritual plagues, and human treachery. And every time, Black Shuck has played a key role in the battle against the Garou's foes. The dark hound has not been seen in many decades, but with the growing threats in Scotland and elsewhere, many believe it is only a matter of time before his inevitable return. Black Shuck is a harbinger of death, and the Garou near Norfolk believe that his return will signal that the Apocalypse is imminent.

Walks-With-Might

He may well be the most famous living Silent Strider in the world. Born just over twenty years ago to a pack of Ethiopian wolves, the Ahroun known as Walks-With-Might has rapidly distinguished himself as one of his tribe's greatest heroes. But while his

countless battles across the northern half of Africa established his reputation as one of Gaia's greatest living warriors, it his actions over the past few years which may well make his name immortal. As Black Tooth's Endless Storm raged across southern Africa, Walks-With-Might was content to ignore the mad Bastet's actions. Although he personally felt the Simba warlord was a brutal tyrant and thug, Walks-With-Might considered the Endless Storm an effective means of keeping the forces of the Wyrm in check and allowed him to focus his attentions on the vampires of Egypt and North Africa. But as news of events across the continent began to reach his ears, the Silent Strider's opinion began to change.

Being born and raised in Africa, Walks-With-Might knows that this is not the Garou's land. The Silent Striders of Africa have always understood that their presence in the region is only tolerated by the land's Fera, and if it were not for the tribal culture of respect for the territory of others, that tolerance would rapidly vanish. For much of his life, Walks-With-Might has worked to ensure that relations between his tribe and Africa's numerous Fera remained non-hostile. Even as a cub, he struggled to understand the land's spirits, as well as those spirits honored by the Fera. Since becoming leader of his tribe in Africa, he has punished those Garou whose actions anger the region's other shapeshifters, even to the point of facing members of other tribes in combat.

As Africa's Fera exploded into bloody civil war, Walks-With-Might grew concerned. Black Tooth's actions reminded the Ahroun of the events of the War of Rage. To his mind, that War had been a mistake, depriving the Garou of much-needed allies and leaving openings for the Wyrm's advancement. If Africa's Fera population was decimated, the Wyrm's forces might easily overrun the entire region. For all the power at his command, Walks-With-Might felt powerless to do anything. Any attempt to intervene, he believed, would be seen by all of the Fera as an act of aggression on the Garou's part and result in violent retaliation. And so it was with great relief that Walks-With-Might received ambassadors from the Fera who came seeking an alliance against the mad tyrant Black Tooth. And it was with great anger he heard stories of the Simba warlord's alliance with Africa's undead. Walks-With-Might pledged his tribe's support to the besieged Fera, and the Silent Striders began teaching their estranged cousins pack tactics and other arts of war.

In the aftermath of Black Tooth's death, Africa's Silent Striders found themselves badly bloodied. A full third of their number had died in the battles against

the Endless Storm and their undead allies. But they had proven that they could successfully fight side by side with the Fera. When Kiva, leader of Africa's Bagheera, proposed an alliance of the continent's Shapeshifters, Walks-With-Might eagerly threw his support behind the effort. Today, the Silent Strider is seen as one of the leaders of the loose alliance known as the Ahadi. Though neither likes the other, both he and Kiva share a grudging respect. Kisasi, the Ajaba queen, feels indebted to Walks-With-Might for his aid, and he holds her in high esteem for actually engineering the alliance that led to the Ahadi. The Kucha Ekundu Red Talons respect him because he is wolf-born, while the Mokolé consider him trustworthy because he and his fellow members of the Desert Wind pack have faithfully followed Crocodile for well over two decades. However, both Walks-With-Might and the new Simba king, Hakimu, avoid each other as much as possible.

In spite of their losses, the Ahadi has revitalized Africa's Striders. Although he fully and wholeheartedly supports the Ahadi as a method of improving relations between Garou and the Fera, Walks-With-Might also recognizes the most utilitarian aspects of the pact. Without hesitation, the Strider leader will demand aid from any of the Ahadi's membership in his war against Africa's vampires. However, honor demands that he and his people also provide aid to the Fera when asked, and Walks-With-Might enforces his tribe's compliance with an iron hand. Presently, the warrior concerns himself with how to deal with the growing forces of the Wyrm now that they are no longer held in check by Black Tooth's brutality, sup-

porting Buries-the-Dead's anti-vampire activities in Egypt, and on attempting to integrate the growing number of Dispossessed immigrants into his forces.

In Lupus form, Walks-With-Might appears as a lean, dark-furred Ethiopian wolf. In Homid form, he is a lean, well-muscled Ethiopian man in his early 40s. In all forms, he can be easily recognized by the twin, parallel scars that mark his forehead, as well as by his deeply intense stare. His every action commands respect and he fully expects to be obeyed by subordinates. In private, he is friendly but quiet, and one can easily see the massive burden that rests on his shoulders.

Mephi Faster-than-Death

Mephi Faster-than-Death first encountered the dead while growing up in Levittown, New Jersey. One of his neighbors, an aging man with blue numbers tattooed on his arm and a haunted look in his eye, once told the boy of how sometimes the dead are resentful of those who are able to escape death and how they won't ever rest until those who survive finally join them. Everyone else thought that the old man was crazy. They whispered about how the terrible things he'd seen — things they would never talk about in front of children — had broken his mind. But Mephi knew better. He could see the ghosts the old man spoke of. He could see the dark and emaciated forms that dwelled in the man's home. Creatures so consumed with loss and grief and hate that all they could do now was force the living to share in that pain. When the man died, the ghosts turned their attentions to the boy who could sense their presence. At the age of fourteen, Mephi Faster-than-Death ran away from home. He's been running from the dead ever since.

Since his First Change, Mephi has made a name for himself as one of the Garou Nation's greatest messengers, lore seekers and — surprisingly for one who so loathes the dead — explorer of the Dark Umbra. He has been to caerns on every continent, visited countless Umbral Realms, and treated with pack alphas, sept leaders and kings from every tribe. His deed name has taken on multiple meanings. Originally called Faster-than-Death for his uncanny ability to dodge foes in battle, as well as for his talent for outrunning whatever trouble he meets along the road, other Garou consider it a testament to the young Strider's knack for reaching septs just in time to warn of attacks and other dangers. But among his own people, Mephi's name is also recognized as a mark of the burden he has carried since a child. Like all of his people, Mephi Faster-than-Death is haunted, but he is also cursed with a second sight far beyond the simple hauntings that plague his tribe. Everywhere he goes, even the dead who do not haunt him are visible to Mephi. Eventually, they notice and demand his help. And so Mephi runs, constantly trying to outrun the dead. To be faster than death.

Although Walks-With-Might and Buries-the-Dead may be more famous within the tribe, it is Mephi that Garou of other tribes most often think of when the Silent Striders are mentioned. Much to his distaste, he has found himself turning into the unofficial spokesman for his people, and the source of many Garou's opinions on the Striders. Of late, Mephi's time is divided between his activities in the material world and in the Dark Umbra. Since the coming of the Red Star, he has worked tirelessly to keep scattered Garou Septs across the world in contact with each other, with the hopes that they will better coordinate their actions, share their lore and be better prepared for the coming Apocalypse. He also continues his investigations of the Dark Umbra, seeking to uncover the truth behind the latest of the great storms that rock the Underworld, and how to force those ghosts who have found their way past the Dark Gauntlet into the material world back into the lands of the dead.

Image: In Homid form, Mephi is of average height but rail thin, and clearly of Semitic descent. He wears his straight, black hair cut just above the shoulders in a style most presume to be quasi-Egyptian but which in truth owes more to his continuing penchant for the grunge music of his youth. In Lupus form, he appears as an Ethiopian wolf with dark brown fur. His natural thinness carries over into his nine-foot tall Crinos form. In both Homid and Crinos form, he can be recognized by the Egyptian style gold jewelry adorning his arms and wrists and by the serpent headed staff he carries. In all forms, Mephi wears the golden necklace engraved with the glyphs for his breed, auspice and tribe which helps identify him to caern guardians and warders.

Roleplaying Hints: Typically friendly and outgoing (in a quiet and slightly reserved way), Mephi becomes evasive when asked about the spirits of the dead and his journeys into the Dark Umbra. He believes passionately in his goals of fostering greater communication and cooperation among the tribes, as well as in his own efforts to gather information and secrets from both the living and the dead. He is equally passionate in his dislike for the restless dead who have haunted him all his life. He helps them only grudgingly, and is more than happy to work out his frustrations on any hostile spirit, vampire or Wyrm minion that gets in his way while doing so.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Galliard

Rank: 3

Physical: Strength 2 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4 (running), Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Primal Urge 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 5, Occult 4 (Restless Dead), Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Pure Breed 3

Rage: 5; **Gnosis:** 3; **Willpower:** 6

Gifts: (1) Persuasion, Mindspeak, Sense Wyrm, Silence, Speed of Thought; (2) Dreamspeak, Messenger's Fortitude, Tread Sebek's Back, (3) Adaptation

Rites: Rite of Cleansing, Rite of the Questing Stone, Rite of the Fetish, Descent Into The Dark Umbra, Prayer for the Prey

Fetishes: Mephi's cobra-headed staff is a singular fetish, created from a cobra-spirit bound into his dearest possession — a staff that was given to him by a dear, now dead friend. While he grasps the staff, the difficulty to step sideways is reduced by 1. The staff adds one extra die to damage pools when used against evil spirits, and if driven bodily into a materialized spirit (requiring four successes on an attack roll and at least two levels of damage after soak), that spirit cannot dematerialize or use the Charm: Reform until the staff is removed. (Level Four, Gnosis 7)

Merits: Ghost Sight

Silent Striders™

Name: **Breed:** **Pack Name:**
Player: **Auspice:** **Pack Totem:**
Chronicle: **Camp:** **Concept:**

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●OOOO	Charisma	●OOOO	Perception	●OOOO
Dexterity	●OOOO	Manipulation	●OOOO	Intelligence	●OOOO
Stamina	●OOOO	Appearance	●OOOO	Wits	●OOOO

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	OOOOO	Animal Ken	OOOOO	Computer	OOOOO
Athletics	OOOOO	Crafts	OOOOO	Enigmas	OOOOO
Brawl	OOOOO	Drive	OOOOO	Investigation	OOOOO
Dodge	OOOOO	Etiquette	OOOOO	Law	OOOOO
Empathy	OOOOO	Firearms	OOOOO	Linguistics	OOOOO
Expression	OOOOO	Leadership	OOOOO	Medicine	OOOOO
Intimidation	OOOOO	Melee	OOOOO	Occult	OOOOO
Primal-Urge	OOOOO	Performance	OOOOO	Politics	OOOOO
Streetwise	OOOOO	Stealth	OOOOO	Rituals	OOOOO
Subterfuge	OOOOO	Survival	OOOOO	Science	OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds	Gifts	Gifts
OOOOO		
OOOOO		
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OOOOO		
OOOOO		

Renown

Glory
O O O O O O O O O O
❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

Honor
O O O O O O O O O O
❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

Wisdom
O O O O O O O O O O
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Rank

Rage

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Gnosis

O O O O O O O O O O
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Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O
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Health

Bruised		❑
Hurt	-1	❑
Injured	-1	❑
Wounded	-2	❑
Mauled	-2	❑
Crippled	-5	❑
Incapacitated		❑

Tribal Weakness

HAUNTED:
ATTRACT GHOSTS WHEN BOTCHING THE ROLL TO STEP SIDEWAYS

Silent Striders™

Homid

No Change

Difficulty: 6

Glabro

Strength (+2)____
Stamina (+2)____
Appearance (-1)____
Manipulation (-2)____

Difficulty: 7

Crinos

Strength (+4)____
Dexterity (+1)____
Stamina (+3)____
Appearance 0
Manipulation (-3)____

Difficulty: 6

INCITE DELIRIUM IN HUMANS

Hispo

Strength (+3)____
Dexterity (+2)____
Stamina (+3)____
Manipulation (-3)____
+1 Die to Bite Damage

Difficulty: 7

Lupus

Strength (+1)____
Dexterity (+2)____
Stamina (+2)____
Manipulation (-3)____
-2 Perception Diff.

Difficulty: 6

Other Traits

_____ OOOOO
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Fetishes

Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____

Rites

_____
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Combat

Maneuver/Weapon	Roll	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll	Diff	Damage
Bite	Dex+Brawl	5	Strength+1/A
Body Tackle	Dex+Brawl	7	Special/B
Claw	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength+1/A
Grapple	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B
Kick	Dex+Brawl	7	Strength+1/B
Punch	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B

A=Aggravated Damage
B=Bashing Damage

Armor:_____

Silent Striders™

Nature: **Demeanor:**

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Expanded Background

Allies

Mentor

Contacts

Pure Breed

Kinfolk

Totem

Possessions

Gear (Carried):

Equipment (Owned):

Sept

Name:

Caern Location:

Level: Type:

Totem:

Leader:

Experience

TOTAL:

Gained From:

TOTAL SPENT:

Spent On:

Silent Striders™

History

Prelude

Description

Age:
Hair:
Eyes:
Race:
Nationality:
Sex:

	Height	Weight
Homid:		
Glabro:		
Crinos:		
Hispo:		
Lupus:		

Battle Scars:

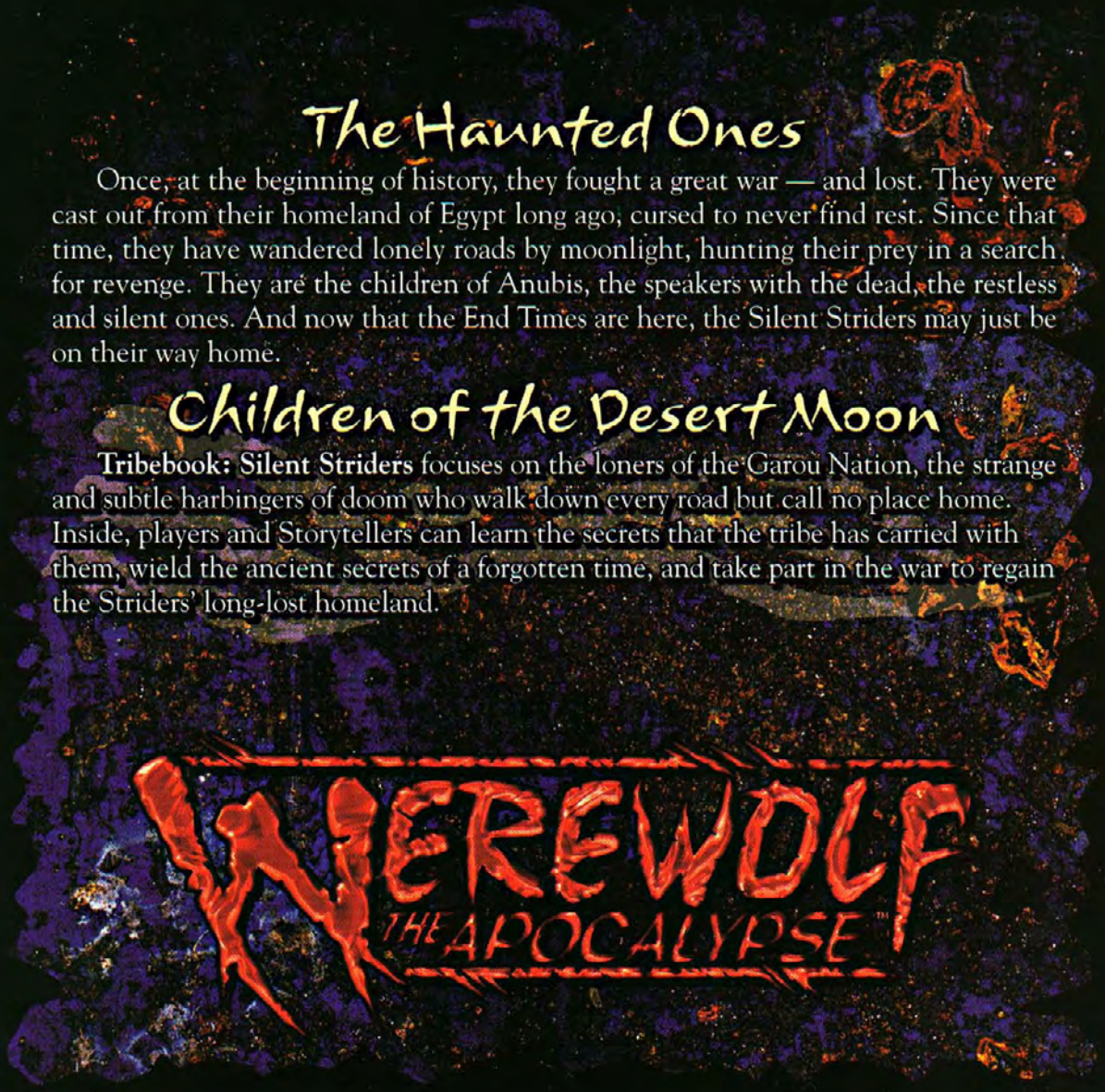
Metis Deformity:

Visuals

Pack Chart

Character Sketch

TRIBEBOOK: SILENT STRIDERS™



The Haunted Ones

Once, at the beginning of history, they fought a great war — and lost. They were cast out from their homeland of Egypt long ago, cursed to never find rest. Since that time, they have wandered lonely roads by moonlight, hunting their prey in a search for revenge. They are the children of Anubis, the speakers with the dead, the restless and silent ones. And now that the End Times are here, the Silent Striders may just be on their way home.

Children of the Desert Moon

Tribebook: Silent Striders focuses on the loners of the Garou Nation, the strange and subtle harbingers of doom who walk down every road but call no place home. Inside, players and Storytellers can learn the secrets that the tribe has carried with them, wield the ancient secrets of a forgotten time, and take part in the war to regain the Striders' long-lost homeland.

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